NINTENDO POWER

Resident Evil: Revelations • Holiday Buyers' Guide • Mario Kart 7 • The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword • Tekken 3D Prime Edition • Rhythm Heaven Fever

274

DECEMBER 2011

SUBSCRIBER EDITION

9.5 out of 10
"A PLATFORMING MASTERPIECE"
-NINTENDO POWER
MEET THE NEW
CRAZY
60+ LEVELS OF PLATFORMING MADNESS
RAYMAN
ORIGINS
EVERYONE 10+
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Comic Mischief
Mild Cartoon Violence
Suggestive Themes

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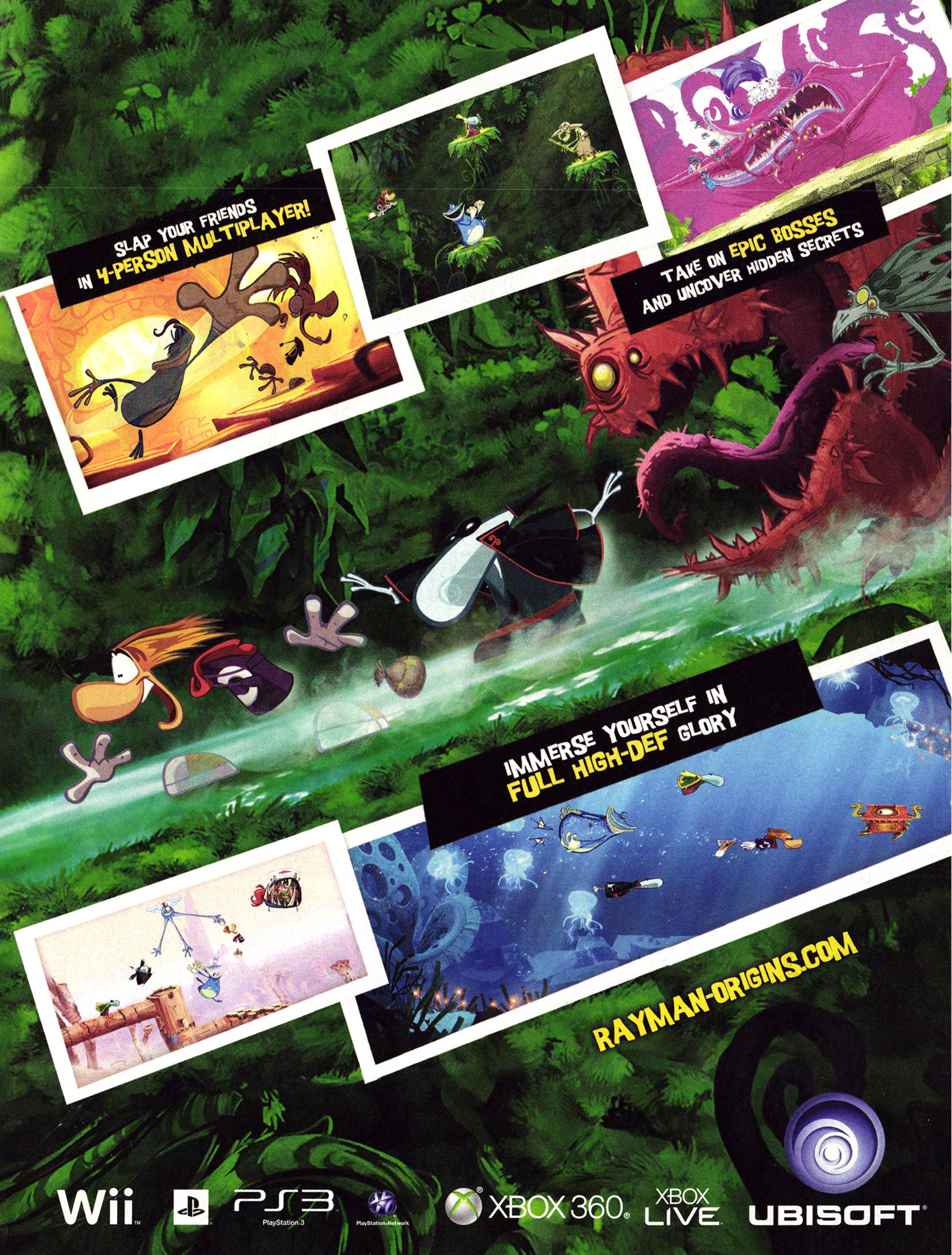
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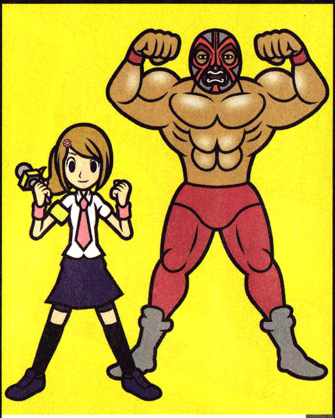
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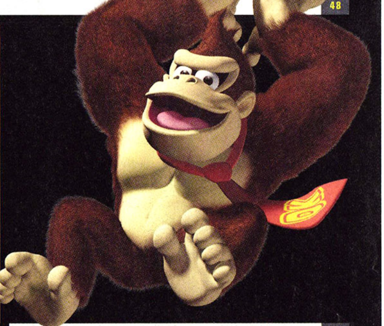
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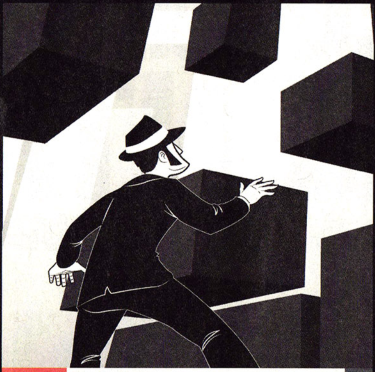

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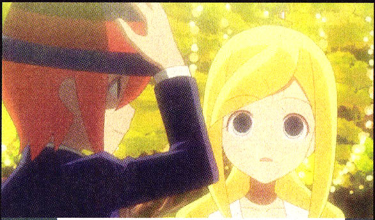

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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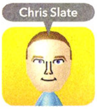
Pulse

What a Crazy Year



The past year has been absolutely nuts. I can't remember another that saw so many twists and turns in the world of Nintendo gaming, with such amazing highs and miserable lows. Case in point: I'm simultaneously playing through three triple-A titles from Nintendo's biggest franchises—Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, and Mario Kart—an avalanche of gaming goodness unlike anything I've experienced before. But until those games arrived very recently, the year had brought few notable releases. The dearth of strong games was especially tough on the Nintendo 3DS handheld, which, despite universal prelaunch praise, stumbled out of the gate largely due to a lack of compelling software. The good news/bad news trend was also exemplified by the E3 half-reveal of next year's Wii U console, which hinted at an incredible amount of potential but offered nothing specific enough for fans to really rally around. Transition years like this have never been easy, but longtime Nintendo gamers know that dry spells always usher in good times. We've already learned that 2012 will see a much more bountiful crop of Nintendo 3DS titles, plus the *full* reveal—and eventual release—of Wii U. So as you say goodbye to 2011, get ready for the fun times ahead. The next year should be just as crazy, but in the way that we Nintendo fans love.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

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MARIO KART 7
Brand-new screens and hands-on impressions of the craziest Mario Kart ever!
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD
OUR FINAL PREVIEW! SEE PG. 38

V273 NOVEMBER 2011

This is The Hoff here, back again to answer your letters while Chris Slate is still drifting through space. Before I get to that, though, I have to make this month's special letter request: now that The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword is out, what is your favorite part of the game? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

Walk of Fame

I bought my Nintendo 3DS the day it came out, and I am happy to say that I have finally reached 1,000,000 steps on the Activity Log. **—YELLOWYOSHI100**

Congratulations! Who says that playing video games doesn't promote a healthy lifestyle? Incidentally, I hope you made wise use of your 10,000 Play Coins.

Snakes a Lot

I've been reading through your coverage of Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D lately and was very impressed with how it sounds. I truly don't want to play M-rated games but this one looks very promising. I mean, killing zombies and monsters or taking a submachine gun and going on a rampage is not my thing, but sneaking into an enemy base with just a combat knife and tranquilizer to start sounds awesome.

—GAME EATER16

Whether one plays an M-rated game is a decision that should be left to players and their parents, but I will say that one of the neat things about Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D is that you *can* get through almost the entire game without killing an enemy character. For more information about what kind of content will be in the game, keep an eye on www.esrb.org.

Big, Bad Bellum

I just got your Official Guide to The Legend of Zelda, and I noticed the Fearsome Foes section didn't have Bellum from The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass. I don't expect to see *every* big boss in there, but I feel the guy (or is Bellum a she?) is under-appreciated. I mean, he's totally a huge Phantoon with eyeballed tentacles and the ability to possess a ghost ship! I think Bellum is one of the most unique bosses in the Legend of Zelda series. **—KATY THE ARTIST**

According to the game, Bellum is male. And I absolutely would have included him in there, but I hear he's a bit shy and doesn't like any unnecessary attention. The last thing I need is *another* giant, tentacled, ship-possessing monster angry with me.

Zelda in the Form of a Question

I was watching *Jeopardy* and one of the contestants said that he had quit his summer job to play a video game. I was falling asleep until he announced that the game was The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time! He continued to say how the game is still the greatest game ever made. I completely 100 percent agree. I rooted for him the rest of the round. Unfortunately, he didn't win, but it was still a cool shout-out to all of the Nintendo fans.

—CREAM THE RABBIT

It was great to see the tribute to the GameCube in the last issue. I'm at the age where it is the system I remember playing the most games on. I was really happy to see that Tales of Symphonia made the list. It's a truly wonderful game! I am proud to say that my family owns 15 of the 25 games highlighted and I can confirm that they are very good games.

—STARBIT

We celebrate 10 years of the ***Nintendo GameCube*** *with the definitive list of the top* ***25 games*** *that you need to own.*

THINK INSIDE *the* CUBE

Done and Done

I just finished Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective. What an amazing game. Please tell the creators to make a sequel. Thanks!

—MARIOMAN311

Capcom, please make a Ghost Trick sequel. Marioman311 demands it.

Know the Score

I've had Nintendo Power for just over a year now, and have been keeping track of your ratings for games, and have noticed that you haven't peaked over 9.5 and haven't dipped below 2.5. So what are the limits to your rating scale? A guy's got to know. **—CHRIS T.**

Nintendo Power's ratings scale goes from 1.0 to 10.0, but if a game is really bad, chances are we aren't going to bother covering it at all; any truly awful games that go straight to the bargain bins don't deserve our attention or yours. As for the top of the ratings scale, we consider a 10 to be extremely special; the last ones we gave out were for Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Metroid Prime 3: Corruption.

Rising Sun Fun

I was wondering if you guys at Nintendo Power enjoy any anime or manga. Nintendo is a Japanese company, and so are a lot of the games for their systems, so I was curious if you enjoyed any other forms of Japanese entertainment. I have spent many hours reading or watching a wacky plot unfold, or lovable characters getting a level-up in awesomeness, and I wanted to know if you share in my experiences. **—REID L.**

Funny you should ask. We do indeed enjoy anime and manga on occasion, especially ones based on video games. You can see some of our favorites on page 54 of this very issue.

Suck It Up

This is something I really don't get, even after I completed Luigi's Mansion for the GameCube. I specifically remember that Luigi's vacuum was called the Poltergust 3000. I read up on Luigi's Mansion 2 and found out his vacuum is called the Poltergust 5000. Shouldn't it be the Poltergust 4000? I really don't get it. **—LOODUDE**

Man, you shouldn't worry about the Poltergust 4000. That thing wasn't one of Professor E. Gadd's better inventions; rumor has it it was made of used Sega Master System cartridges. If you see the professor trying to hawk one on a street corner, just ignore him.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I'd first like to say congratulations to The Hoff for taking control of Pulse. However, I have a few questions.

1. Is Liquid Hoff the failed experiment of you altering your DNA to be the third Hardy Brother? The two seem strangely related.
2. If Chris Slate got launched into space, how could he still write the Super Mario 3D Land review, introduce the magazine, and talk about other items?
3. Where do I go to get the cookie Steve promised?

—LINKISGREAT

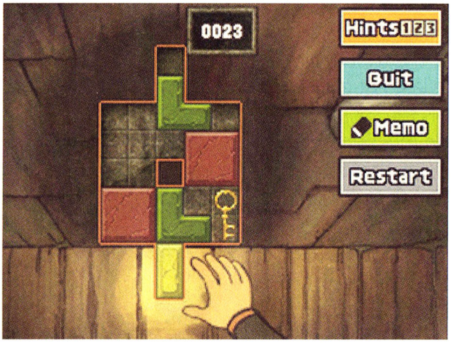
Liquid Hoff says: How dare you insinuate that *I* am some sort of failure?! Everybody knows that I am the superior version, and that The Hoff is merely a failed version of *me*! Being the benevolent future-world-ruler that I am, however, I will inform you that obviously the NP crew remains in contact with Chris Slate through the use of genetically enhanced spacefaring fruit bats. Coincidentally, they ate your allotment of Steve's cookies.

Save the Princess, Paisano!

Incoming genius idea: Nintendo should release a more realistic-looking Mario game, with Lou Albano and Danny Wells from *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!* as the models for Mario and Luigi. Man, wouldn't that be an epic game? **—LEESILBOMBER**

Honestly—and I say this with all due respect to Lou Albano and Danny Wells—that's probably one of the more hideous suggestions we've recently received. Nonetheless, I'll use this as an excuse to run an image from the episode in which Mario and Luigi danced with Sgt. Slaughter. Now *that* could be the basis for a game!

For me, it's definitely the Professor Layton series's dreaded sliding-block puzzles. Nearly every fan of the series should remember the frustration of cramming blocks anywhere they can. **—STARRODKIRBY86**



What's the worst that you've ever been stuck in a game?

The hardest thing I've been stuck on in a video game is in the World 7 castle in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. I was stuck on that darn level for months! Finally, several (and I mean *several*) months later, my brother, my sister, and I beat the boss! Unfortunately, we're now stuck on the first level in World 8. **—FORREST L.**

When I was 10 I loved playing Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door. I played it all the time, even though I wasn't very good. But when I got to the fifth boss, Cortez, I got scared and couldn't play any more! I don't know if it was the creepy music, the fact that the boss was a giant skull, or if it was just really dark out that night, but it scared me and I didn't play the game again for two or three years! I'm 16 now and have started a new file in which I've gotten well past that part, but I'll never forget how scary that boss was the first time I fought it. **—THE BOZ**

The very worst I've ever been stuck in a game has got to be in The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask. I find the three-day cycle very difficult, and I have a very hard time controlling Goron Link. I was stuck in the Snowhead Temple and couldn't get the hang of rolling around. As embarrassing as it is, I'm still to this very day stuck on that part! Sad, I know.
—TRENT

When I played EarthBound way back when, I was horribly underleveled when I reached the Lost Underworld. The enemies there like the Chomposaur decimated my party time and again. I must have been stuck there for hours, since there was always something in front of the exit that I couldn't run from.... **—SEPHIROTH1204**

The worst that I have ever been stuck in a game would have to be in Zelda II: The Adventure of Link. I should have realized that this game was nothing like the first one! The palaces continued to kick my butt day in and day out, but I gradually proceeded through the game...that is, until I reached the final palace. I tried time after time and simply could not beat that palace. I eventually shelved the game in favor of other titles and did not play it for many years. I finally brought the game out of retirement a few years ago. Oh, the satisfaction to finally defeat Shadow Link and see those final credits roll! **—KURT SLITAGUT**

Ruler of the Sky from Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days was a really challenging boss. It took me many months to beat him, and I remember when I did I got up and did my victory dance. **—VIDEOGAMEGIRL**

I was stuck in The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker when I had to sneak past the Moblins in the Forsaken Fortress. Whenever they would throw the lantern at me and I got caught I would get really scared! **—SONICFAN500**

Worst ever? My new boyfriend had a floppy disc with the text-only PC game Oo-Topos. I played that game from 1983 to 1985. I drew maps. I made notes. Finally I expressed my extreme frustration to my boyfriend. "Oh, that disc? It has a bug. Can't be solved. It's missing a section." I bought an NES and never looked back. Mario wouldn't treat me like that. As for the boyfriend? I married him anyway. He understands when I spend an entire Saturday finishing RoboWarrior. **—LIZ M.**

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

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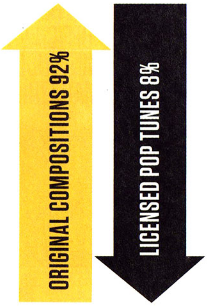

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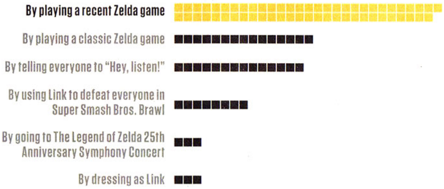

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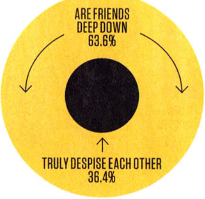


HOW MANY ZELDA GAMES HAVE YOU PLAYED?

SEVERAL 42%

A FEW 30%

ALL OF THEM! 19%

ONLY ONE! 5%

NONE! 4%

WHICH NINTENDO SELECTS GAME ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO BUY?

25% **None; I already have them all**

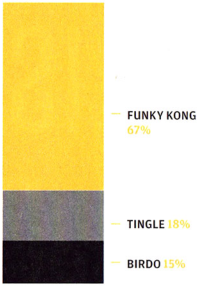
24% **Super Paper Mario**

19% **Super Mario Galaxy**

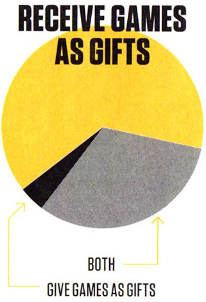
18% **Punch-Out!!**

14% **Mario Strikers Charged**

WHO WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE AS A ROOMMATE?



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, I EXPECT TO...



OF THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE NES GAMES GIVEN TO NINTENDO 3DS AMBASSADORS, WHICH HAVE YOU SPENT THE MOST TIME PLAYING?

SUPER MARIO BROS.

Super Mario Bros. 32% • The Legend of Zelda 27% • Zelda II: The Adventure of Link 10% • Metroid 10% • Yoshi 7% • Balloon Fight 6% • Donkey Kong Jr. 2% • Ice Climber 2% • NES Open Tournament Golf 2% • Wrecking Crew 2%

Because Jess plays video games the ESRB (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.
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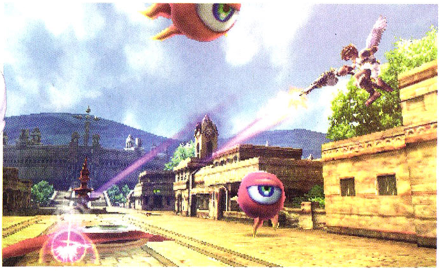


Pit uses high-level incendiary abilities to rain holy hell upon his foes.

NEWS from JAPAN

Angel in the Details

A Japanese media briefing has revealed the strategic side of Kid Icarus: Uprising.

IN THE TIME since the E3 debut of Kid Icarus: Uprising, we've seen plenty of footage of the game's intense ground-based and midair action scenes. But now Nintendo has revealed two RPG-flavored aspects of the hotly anticipated Nintendo 3DS title.

The first is a series of divine items that give Pit access to special abilities, which players can activate from the touch screen. Said abilities include everything from healing spells to performing high jumps to launching attacks such as wave beams and meteor showers. (One will even allow you to turn the tables on enemy wizards by transforming *them* into eggplants!) These items can be found in higher- and lower-level variations, with higher-level versions having more powerful effects and allowing players to use them more often. But higher-level items are also larger, and Pit can use only as many abilities as can be squeezed into the limited space on his ability grid. Thus, players will have to make the hard choice between packing a few powerful abilities and carrying a wider assortment of weaker ones.

The second newly revealed component offers a unique take on an RPG-style loot system. During the game's action scenes, Pit will find hearts in treasure chests and collect them from defeated enemies. Between levels, he can return to his home base and offer those hearts to his guardian goddess, Palutena. She'll reward him with the special items mentioned in the previous paragraph, or new weapons that Pit can wield in combat. Interestingly, even if you earn the same weapon twice, it could have very different properties. One weapon may have superior stats while its visually identical counterpart may offer special properties such as a longer combo string, added effects (for example, petrification), or abilities such as a chance to automatically evade enemy attacks. Fortunately, Pit's home base is equipped with a firing range where he can get a feel for his various weapons before he takes them into real combat. And if you don't like a weapon, you can have it broken up for more hearts—Palutena need never know that you took the cash value on her sacred offering. **—CASEY L.**

THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
25th
ANNIVERSARY
SYMPHONY

Legendary Performance

The Legend of Zelda 25th Anniversary Symphony pays tribute to the saga's musical history.

AS PART OF the 25th-anniversary celebration for The Legend of Zelda franchise, Nintendo recently teamed up with Jason Michael Paul Productions, Inc. for a symphony concert at the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles. The sold-out evening included music spanning Zelda's entire history, performed by a full orchestra and choir.

Glossy collectible programs handed out at the door featured the full set list, notes on each composition and arrangement, and a collage of Link character art from each game. Long lines of fans snaked through the theater foyer to purchase commemorative T-shirts and posters, and Link and Zelda cosplayers mingled with other smartly dressed attendees. Skyward Sword demo kiosks were scattered about the venue, too, so concert-goers could get a taste of the forthcoming game.

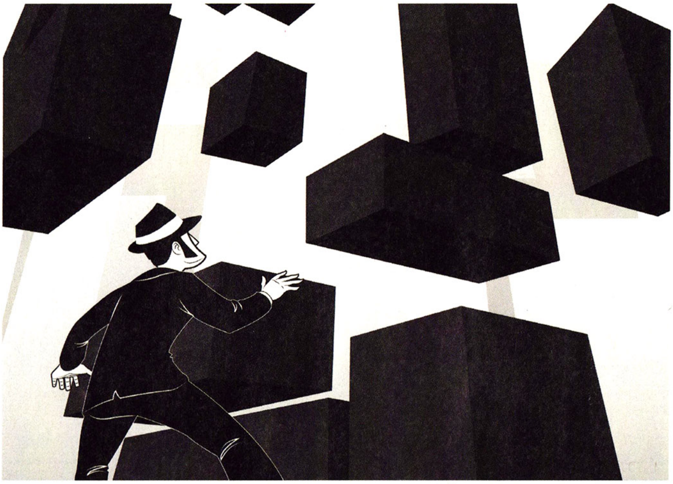
Composer Koji Kondo [left] and producer Eiji Aonuma [right] address attendees.

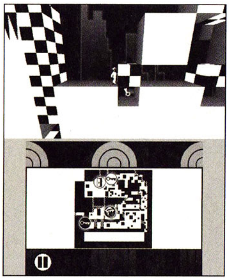
As the lights dimmed, Zelda-series producer Eiji Aonuma took the stage to thank the fans and introduce the event. The performance kicked off with the "Hyrule Castle Theme" from A Link to the Past, followed by such iconic pieces as "Princess Zelda's Theme," "Gerudo Valley" from Ocarina of Time, and the "Great Fairy Fountain Theme." One night is not enough time to showcase every classic Zelda song, but several medleys helped to cover the essentials, including a sampling of boss-battle music, a suite of Ocarina melodies, and a 25th-anniversary medley arranged especially for the event.

Each piece was complemented by video montages projected on stage behind the performers, which brought us right back to the feeling we had when we first played each game. During several particularly stirring moments—such as Link's final battle against Ganon in Ocarina of Time accompanied by the orchestra playing "Ganondorf's Theme"—the audience's cheers even drowned out the music momentarily.

After the grand finale, which was a medley of variations on the Zelda main theme, composer Koji Kondo took the stage and played a beautiful piano solo of "Grandma's Theme" from The Wind Waker. That wasn't the last surprise, though—Mr. Aonuma then returned once more to introduce a final orchestra performance of the Skyward Sword theme. A full list of dates for the world tour of the 25th Anniversary symphony have yet to be announced (keep an eye on zelda-symphony.com), but it's definitely worth checking out if there's a performance in your area.

—CAROLYN G.



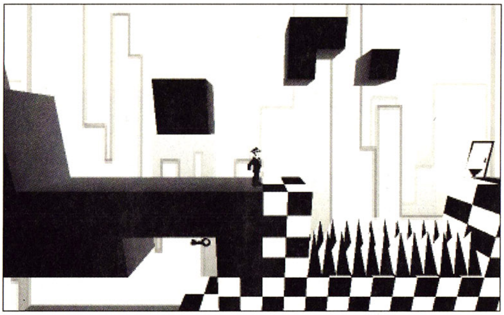


Shift into 3D

The eye-twisting **Shifting World** finds its way to Nintendo 3DS.

THE NINTENDO DS gave a portable home to a lot of addictive online Flash games: Line Rider, N+, and Diner Dash, to name a few. Now, that system's 3D heir is keeping up the tradition. Shifting World, the latest in a series of action puzzlers by Armor Games, is on its way to the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

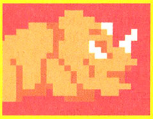
The granddaddy of the series was simply called Shift, and it's one of those games that's much easier to play than it is to describe. Each level is a simple black-and-white platform world. The goal is to move a little stick-figure hero to the exit by running, jumping, tripping switches, and avoiding deadly obstacles. Getting there isn't always possible, though—not without shifting the stage, at least. Hitting the "shift" button flips the level upside down and turns all the black areas white. Suddenly, every open space becomes a platform to walk on instead. Trickier puzzles call for shift after shift before the way to the exit opens up.



Online, the series has already gone through four installments, each adding more traps and gimmicks, such as teleporters, exploding barriers, or low gravity. And within Shifting World's 60 levels you'll find a stunt that's possible only on the Nintendo 3DS: letting players shift between 2D and 3D. A recipe for brain-melting challenge? Maybe, but so far the Shift games have been great at turning potential pain into addictive good times. We'll see if that feat is accomplished again when Aksys Games brings out Shifting World this coming spring. —**DAVID S.**

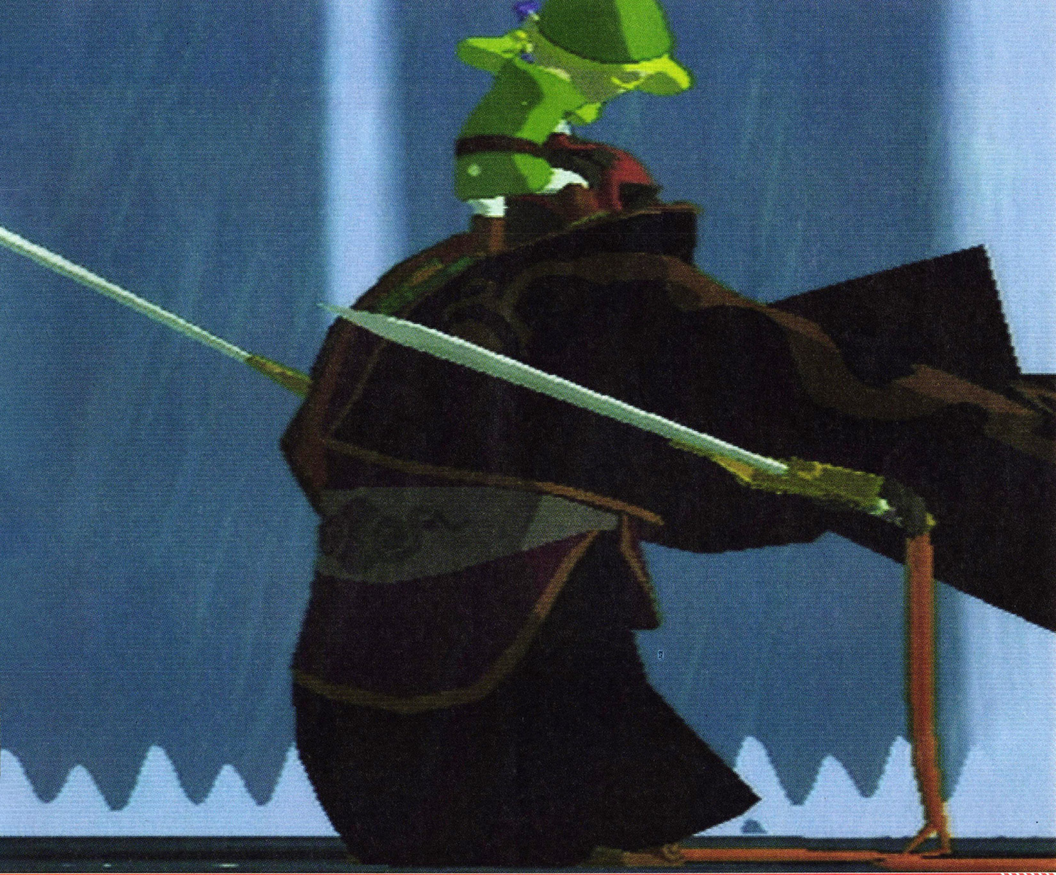
A WINNER IS...

Buy-two-get-one-free video game sales.



DODONGO DISLIKES...

Being left out of The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword.



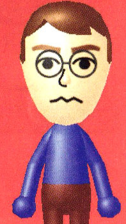
THAT WAS AWESOME!

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

GANONDORF'S DEMISE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER, NINTENDO GAMECUBE, 2003

"When Link ran his sword through Ganondorf's skull at the end of Wind Waker, my jaw hit the floor. The brutal moment was all the more shocking given the game's whimsical art style." —**STEVE T.**



STAR POWER

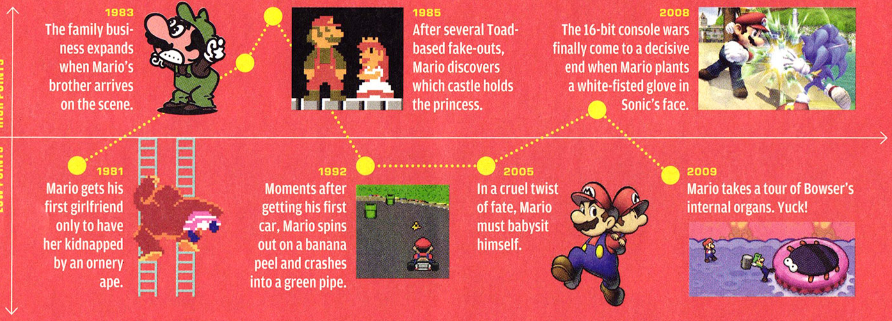
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
DONKEY KONG ARCADE, 1981

Mario

After 30 years of great games, is it any wonder that Nintendo's premier plumber is one of the most popular video game characters ever?

CAREER GRAPH



1981
Mario gets his first girlfriend only to have her kidnapped by an ornery ape.

1983
The family business expands when Mario's brother arrives on the scene.

1985
After several Toad-based fake-outs, Mario discovers which castle holds the princess.

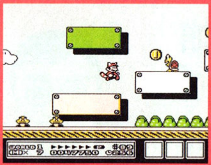
1992
Moments after getting his first car, Mario spins out on a banana peel and crashes into a green pipe.

2005
In a cruel twist of fate, Mario must babysit himself.

2008
The 16-bit console wars finally come to a decisive end when Mario plants a white-fisted glove in Sonic's face.

2009
Mario takes a tour of Bowser's internal organs. Yuck!

OUR FAVORITE MARIO GAMES



Super Mario Bros. 3
NES, 1990
Mario's third NES adventure was a true evolution of the fantastic gameplay of the original game. It featured all of the block-breaking, coin-collecting, and Koopa-stomping that we loved, but upgraded it with new power-ups, skills, and worlds.

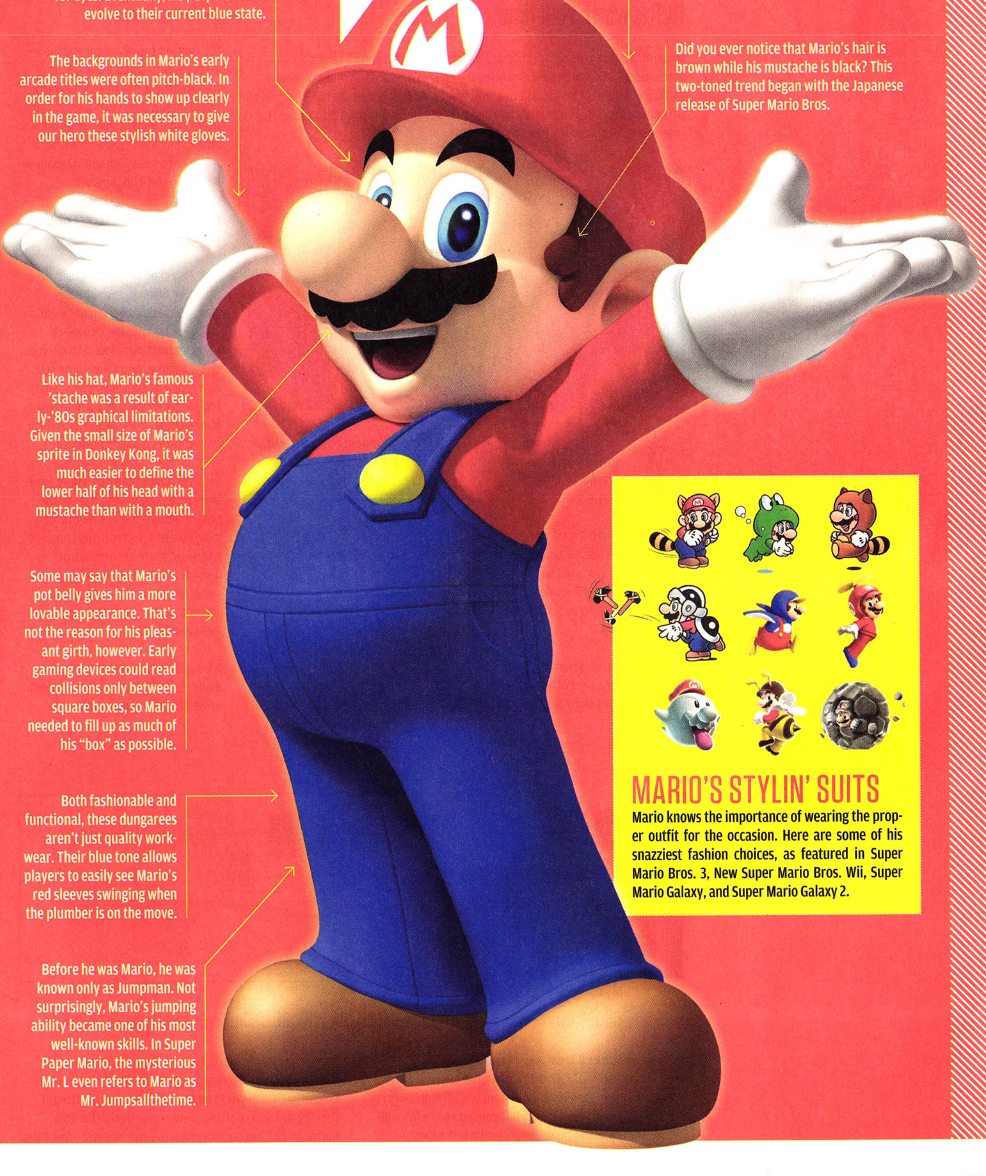
Super Mario World
SUPER NES, 1991
This is how you introduce people to the power of the Super NES! Players were immediately taken in by the colorful, vibrant levels and nifty graphical effects of Super Mario World. Of course, Mario's new friend Yoshi added to the fun.

Super Mario 64
NINTENDO 64, 1996
Moving Mario from the 2D realm into the third dimension was pretty risky, but Nintendo pulled it off and Super Mario 64 is still regarded as one of the best games of all time. The outstanding control and level design made this an instant classic.

Super Mario Galaxy
Wii, 2007
With its stunning graphics and rich orchestral score, it's hard to not be wowed by Super Mario Galaxy. The novel world design—which has Mario running through a series of small planetoids—provided a slick new twist on classic platforming.

SUPER MARIO 64, NINTENDO 64, 1996

"It's-a me, Mario!"



In the early days of the arcade the artwork that adorned the cabinets for Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr., and Mario Bros. depicted Mario with black dots for eyes. Eventually, his peepers would evolve to their current blue state.

The backgrounds in Mario's early arcade titles were often pitch-black. In order for his hands to show up clearly in the game, it was necessary to give our hero these stylish white gloves.

Like his hat, Mario's famous 'stache was a result of early-'80s graphical limitations. Given the small size of Mario's sprite in Donkey Kong, it was much easier to define the lower half of his head with a mustache than with a mouth.

Some may say that Mario's pot belly gives him a more lovable appearance. That's not the reason for his pleasant girth, however. Early gaming devices could read collisions only between square boxes, so Mario needed to fill up as much of his "box" as possible.

Both fashionable and functional, these dungarees aren't just quality workwear. Their blue tone allows players to easily see Mario's red sleeves swinging when the plumber is on the move.

Before he was Mario, he was known only as Jumpman. Not surprisingly, Mario's jumping ability became one of his most well-known skills. In Super Paper Mario, the mysterious Mr. L even refers to Mario as Mr. Jumpsallthetime.

Mario is rarely seen without his trademark hat. Originally, however, it was not a simple fashion choice. Mario was given a hat because with just a few pixels, it was easier to draw than hair.

Did you ever notice that Mario's hair is brown while his mustache is black? This two-toned trend began with the Japanese release of Super Mario Bros.

MARIO'S STYLIN' SUITS

Mario knows the importance of wearing the proper outfit for the occasion. Here are some of his snazziest fashion choices, as featured in Super Mario Bros. 3, New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Super Mario Galaxy, and Super Mario Galaxy 2.

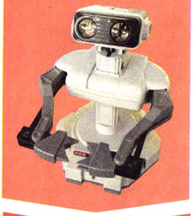
POWER QUIZ

EASY

In the movie *The Wizard*, which NES accessory does Lucas Barton love because it's "so bad"?

AVERAGE

The lovable robot that was originally included with the NES was named R.O.B. What does R.O.B. stand for?



HARDCORE

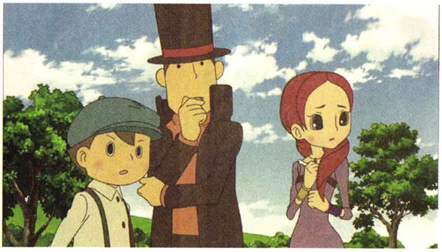
What two NES accessories allowed up to four players to play games simultaneously?

ANSWERS EASY: The Power Glove; AVERAGE: Robotic Operating Buddy; HARDCORE: The NES Four Score and the NES Satellite

Theater of Mystery

Find out if the *Professor Layton and the Eternal Diva* DVD is worth your time.

INSPIRED BY THE popular Professor Layton puzzle-adventure series on Nintendo DS, the *Professor Layton and the Eternal Diva* animated film is now available on DVD in North America courtesy of Viz Media. So how did it turn out? NP editors Chris Hoffman and Phil Theobald put on their top hats to discuss the merits of the professor's film debut.



CHRIS H. I'll get straight to the point: overall, I enjoyed the movie.

PHIL T. As did I. I was a bit skeptical going into it as video game-to-anime productions don't always work, but this stays very true to the source material.

CH Indeed. It truly looks and feels like an authentic part of the Layton series. I think it's slightly heavier on the fantasy elements than the games are, but the characters are as true as can be. The fact that Level-5 was heavily involved surely helped a lot.

PT I'm not going to say that the fantasy elements felt out of place, but it is definitely a change from the games. Strangely enough, the only part of the movie that disappointed me was when they shoehorned the game-style puzzle-solving into the storyline.

CH I was a little worried about that when it first occurred, but they didn't go overboard. And I liked the fact that the audience had time to solve the puzzles before the answers were revealed. On the other hand, I really don't like Luke's voice. This version of Luke sounds like a girl.

PT I wasn't too distracted by the voice. Sure, it was a little (OK...a lot) over the top in the enthusiasm department, but I suppose I sort of expect that kind of thing from an anime dub. Still, for the "purists," it was nice to see the original Japanese-language track on the DVD.

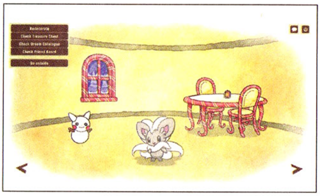
CH True. And all the other English voices were great.

PT I also liked seeing a whole film using the offbeat, slightly ugly characters designs from the Layton universe. It made the film much more interesting to look at than your typical anime. And I was surprised at how touching the ending was. I may have had to choke back a man tear or two. Pity that North America didn't get a Blu-ray release, however.

CH And bonus features would have been nice. Regardless, I'd say the bottom line is that although this movie wasn't perfect, and requires a little bit more suspension of disbelief than the games, anyone who enjoys the Professor Layton series would do well to check it out. Two thumbs up?

PT A gentleman never displays his digits in such a boorish fashion. Still, a fine film. Well worth watching.

Deck the Halls



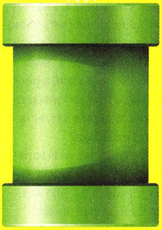
Spread holiday cheer to the **Pokémon Global Link** with an exclusive Dream World design!

HAVE YOU DECKED OUT your house with holiday decorations yet? Yes? Good. Now, what about your *other* home, the one in the Pokémon Dream World? Don't worry if the holiday hustle and bustle has caused you to fall a bit behind; we're here to help. Simply visit the Promotions page at the Pokémon Global Link (www.pokemon.com/pgl) and put in this password: NPWINTER. Then, visit the Pokémon Dream World and browse through the Dream Catalog to find a cool new candy-cane design for your house and a Pikachu snowman! Happy holidays! —**CHRIS S.**

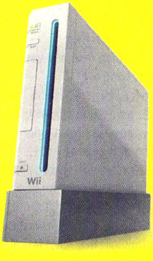
WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

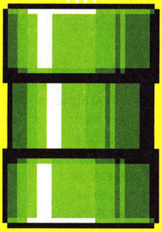
5 YEARS AGO

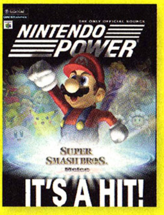


December 2006 was a big one—the long-awaited launch of the Wii console. The issue included a full rundown of the Wii hardware, the various Channels built into the system, and the Virtual Console library, alongside a buyer's guide that covered every launch game, from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Wii Sports to Call of Duty 3 and Red Steel. Meanwhile, DS owners could rock out to a feature on the woefully underappreciated Elite Beat Agents.



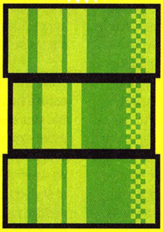
10 YEARS AGO



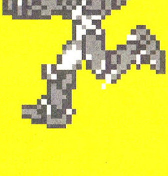


Mario kind of stole the spotlight on the cover of Vol. 151, but the issue wasn't about just him—it was also about Pikachu, Bowser, Kirby, Link, Yoshi, Captain Falcon, and many of the other biggest names in gaming as they prepared to duke it out in Super Smash Bros. Melee for GameCube. Even a decade later, Melee may be the best entry in the series. It's just too bad that the game largely overshadowed the month's other major release: a little project from Shigeru Miyamoto called Pikmin.

20 YEARS AGO



Today Samus Aran is one of gaming's premier heroes, but 20 years ago she was still making a name for herself. In fact, her second adventure—Metroid II: Return of Samus—was just arriving on Game Boy. The game garnered 10 pages of coverage and the cover spot of Nintendo Power Vol. 31. Other noteworthy titles in the issue were the original Pilotwings and Enix's unique action/simulation hybrid ActRaiser, both for Super NES.



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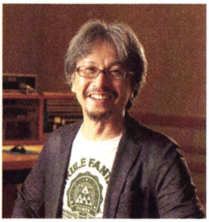
Forging a Legend

From Groose to goddesses, producer Eiji Aonuma shares his postrelease thoughts on The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword.

If you haven't completed The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for the Wii console yet, you might want to do so before continuing with this article. All done? Good. Then read on to get longtime Legend of Zelda producer Eiji Aonuma's insight on what went into making the year's must-play adventure. What's up with the goddesses? Where's the boomerang? Which character was inspired by Aonuma himself? Find out the answers to these questions and more in this tell-all interview (and don't miss the review on page 82). Warning: spoilers ahead! —CHRIS H.



NINTENDO POWER What sorts of things did you have to pay attention to during the development of The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword, thanks to the inclusion of compatibility with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, that you didn't have to in previous Legend of Zelda games?

EIJI AONUMA Our top priorities during development were making sure that players could use Wii MotionPlus to freely swing their sword, and making sure that the enemy AI was resilient enough to deal with that. The big difference between the enemies in this game and the enemies in previous installments is that now enemies can see the direction Link's sword is moving, and take action to defend themselves from an attack from that specific direction. (However, there are some enemies who can't defend themselves at all.) This is something that was never a part of the series back when players simply pressed a button to swing the sword, and it has added a welcome puzzle-solving element to the combat.

How did you decide which items to bring back? Were there any items you considered but that got left on the cutting-room floor? Where's the boomerang?

When we were exploring ways to use the Wii MotionPlus, we decided we wanted a projectile that players could control more directly, so we replaced the boomerang with the new Beetle item. We also considered a lot of other classic items, and winnowed them down to the ones that would be the most fun to control with Wii MotionPlus. Instead of focusing on quantity, we wanted to offer a deeper experience with each item (which includes aspects like the upgrade system).

As a result of this rigorous selection process, there were some items that ended up on the cutting-room floor. I wish I could tell you what they were, but we may end up using them in the next Zelda game, so I want to keep them secret for now.

We have to ask: What was Zelda going to tell Link before the black whirlwind separated them at the beginning of the game?

I wonder! I think I'd rather have each player come up with his own answer.

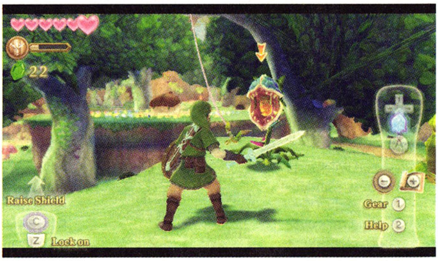
Aside from the sky, the game features only three main areas, each of which is visited multiple times during the adventure. Why was the game structured in this manner instead of including more areas?

We decided to simplify the world for this installment because we wanted players to feel more connected to each area, and find more of the secrets that we've hidden throughout them. Looking back at Twilight Princess, we felt that its world was too large and too time-consuming to travel through, and that's what led us to structure Skyward Sword the way we did.

The most challenging part of implementing this new structure was making it so that players could reach their destinations as quickly as possible while still making new discoveries along the way.

What's the deal with the evil catlike Remlits in Skyloft at night? Did someone on the team have a bad experience with his cat or something?

We wanted the nighttime version of Skyloft to feel different, so we decided to make a species of animal that was cute and loveable during the day but transformed into a horrible beast at night. And that was how we came up with the monsters known as Remlits. I don't think that the Remlits were actually based on cats (they can fly, after all), and I'm quite sure that they weren't inspired by some staff member's hatred of cats or anything, but I guess I could see how a cat-lover might raise an eyebrow at that. [Laughs]



We really like Groose, and how he changes from a typical bully into a much more interesting character. How did the character evolve during development of the game? (And do you think he deserves to get a Legend of Groose game?)

The Legend of Groose? That's an interesting idea! [Laughs]

In Skyward Sword, Link and Zelda begin the game as childhood friends and classmates at a boarding school, and we thought that it would make for a more interesting story if we also had a character who could act as Link's rival. After all, schoolyard rivalries are a staple element of boarding-school dramas.

One of the reasons Groose grows up and begins helping Link in the latter half of the story is that by having the characters around Link grow and mature, it helps strengthen the sense that the player's character is growing as well.

The headmaster's name, Gaepora, is pretty similar to the owl's name from Ocarina of Time, Kaepora Gaebora. The headmaster even has owl-like eyebrows and a hooting laugh. Were these characters intentionally made similar, or is that just a coincidence?

The headmaster holds a wide variety of knowledge (he was originally designed to be the priest who was the heir to the legend of the goddess), and so the designer made him look like that in order to present a wise and dignified image. He wasn't actually designed around Kaepora Gaebora, but since he did end up resembling him, we gave him the name Gaepora.

Speaking of supporting characters, which ones are you particularly fond of?

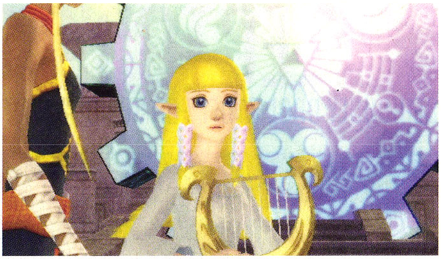
My favorite is Eagus, the Knight Commander at the Sparring Hall. I actually wrote all of his dialogue myself. My grandfather used to teach kendo (a Japanese sword art) at the police academy, so I studied kendo when I was a small child. The Knight Commander acts a little self-important, but in a way, I feel like it's me who's speaking through him. (I also wrote the dialogue for the Hero's Shade who teaches Link the hidden skills in Twilight Princess.) If anyone out there is having trouble with their sword technique, please go to the Sparring Hall and pay him a visit!

With all the flying in the game, we thought there'd be some sort of aerial-racing minigame. Is there a reason there wasn't one?
Designing courses for an aerial race is difficult, and since Loftwings fly by rising up and then gliding downward, they didn't seem very well suited to high-speed racing. Those are the main reasons we decided not to include one.

This game has some of our favorite boss fights in the Zelda series. What was your favorite boss fight, and why?
If you mean in the whole series, my favorite is probably Crayk from Phantom Hourglass. It could attack while invisible, but by using the two screens of the Nintendo DS, you could fight it by watching from the boss's perspective, which was a lot of fun. (I'd wanted to make a boss like that for a while.) As for Skyward Sword, the crafty swordplay in the Ghirahim fight stands as a really memorable moment for me.

The Silent Realms are pretty nerve-wracking! Why did you want to include those areas, and what was your philosophy for their designs?
Typically, Link uses his sword to fight through enemies, and that made me wonder what kind of game we could make if Link couldn't use his sword or any items at all. That thought ended up being the inspiration for the Silent Realms. We've incorporated the idea of battling indestructible enemies with the phantoms in Phantom Hourglass and Spirit Tracks, but this time we wanted to keep it simple by restricting players to using only Link's inherent abilities (like pressing A to dash). The time restrictions add an element of strategy, and make knowledge of the area the key to success, which is why we set them in the areas that players would be the most familiar with.

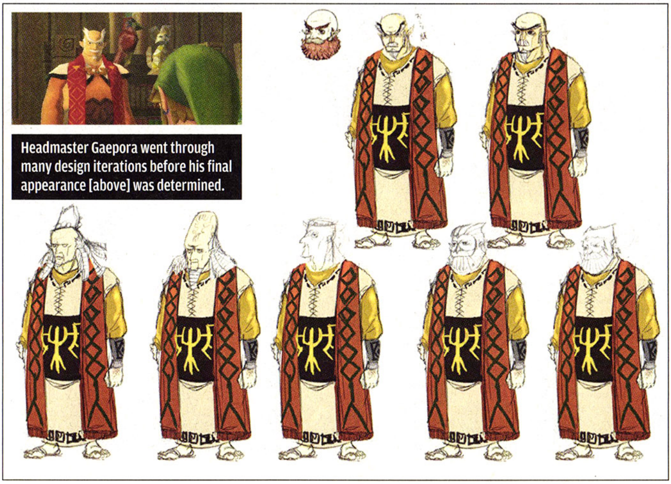
Although this game focused on the tale of the goddess, Hylia, previous Zelda games talked about three goddesses (Din, Farore, and Nayru) that created the world. How do you reconcile these different deities of Hyrule?
The goddess and Zelda—who had always been fated to be the bearer of divine power—are one and the same. People have simply called them by different names. The deeds of the goddess in the past marked the beginning of The Legend of Zelda, and the starting point of the destiny that was thereafter guided by the power of the three great goddesses (the Triforce).



The game has a huge amount of content. How did you decide, "This is enough"?
With Zelda, there really isn't any clear line where we say, "This is enough." Of course, we could try to quantify the amount of content by counting the dungeons, but with Skyward Sword, the number of dungeons wouldn't be a very good indicator of volume, because other aspects of the game are more substantial and numerous. After playing through the whole thing—even as the producer of the game—I was honestly shocked at how much content there was. We didn't want the dungeons in Skyward Sword to be the sort of thing we would cut or add to adjust the amount of content, so instead we focused on other aspects of the game. I suppose it was inevitable that game systems that repeatedly offered new reasons to explore familiar locations would result in such a huge amount of content.

There definitely seems to be more challenge than in some recent Zelda games. Aside from Hero mode, what would you consider to be the most challenging part of Skyward Sword?
That's a difficult question to answer. We started development of Skyward Sword determined to confront all of the conventions of the Zelda series that we take for granted, and I think that led to a lot of them being transformed into something more challenging, in the sense that they won't be what longtime Zelda fans are expecting. Now, we didn't make such decisions lightly; they came from a painstaking process of distilling years of feedback from fans and the opinions of experienced Zelda-team members who felt that certain aspects of the series needed to be reformed. Considering all that, I think it's really meaningful that we were able to complete this game when we did, on the 25th anniversary of the Zelda series.

Finally, now that development of Skyward Sword is complete, have you had a chance to give any more thought to what The Legend of Zelda might be like on Wii U?
As I mentioned earlier, Skyward Sword was a title where we took aim at all the conventions of the Zelda series. While that may have been difficult, I think that confronting those challenges resulted in something that has a great deal of value. When it comes to Wii U, we'll obviously want to add new elements that take advantage of the capabilities of the platform. But I think using that as a lens through which we once again challenge the conventions of Zelda is more important than just making another Zelda game. With that in mind, please expect big things from the Zelda series to come!



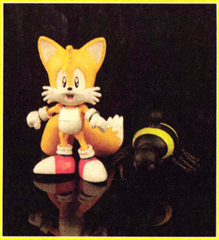
Headmaster Gaepora went through many design iterations before his final appearance [above] was determined.

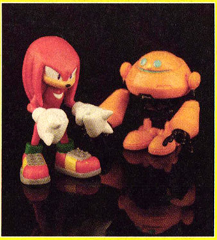
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

Anniversary Party

What better way to celebrate Sonic's 20th anniversary than with these 3" action figures from Jazwares? The series features heroes and enemies from throughout the Sonic the Hedgehog franchise, and includes classic Sonic (with Moto Bug), Shadow (with Mono Beetle), modern Sonic (with Spinner), classic Tails (with Grabber), Knuckles (with Egg Pawn), Silver (with Lblis Biter), and modern Tails (with Sandworm). They're available at most major retailers for about $8 each.





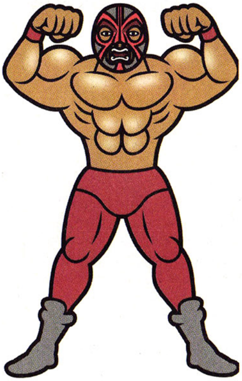
Pixel-Perfect

Mega Man! Proto Man! Dr. Wily! Rush! They're all part of the Rockman Dot.Strap Collection Vol. 1—a great way for gamers to add some 8-bit flavor to their cell phones. Unfortunately, they're available only in Japan.

GAME FORECAST

Wii

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII	City	2/12
Mario Party 9	Nintendo	TBA
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Outdoors Unlimited	Mastiff	2/12
Rhythm Heaven Fever	Nintendo	2/12



Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Batman: Arkham City	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battlefield 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Darksiders II	THQ	TBA
Killer Freaks from Outer Space	Ubisoft	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	TBA
Metro: Last Light	THQ	TBA
Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pikmin*	Nintendo	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tekken*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online	Ubisoft	TBA

NINTENDO DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	Atlus	2/12

NINTENDO 3DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Balloon Pop 2	UFO	2/12
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Brunswick Pro Bowling	Crave	TBA
Carnival Games Wild West 3D	Take-Two	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
Crush 3D	Sega	1/12
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Farm*	Ubisoft	11/11
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Fractured Soul 3D	Ignition	2012
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Heroes of Ruin	Square Enix	2012
Horsez	Ubisoft	3/12
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	TBA
Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	2012
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Luigi's Mansion 2	Nintendo	2012
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	Sega	2/12
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	2012
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
NCIS*	Ubisoft	3/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
Planet Crashers 3D	Ignition	2012
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	3/12
Raving Rabbids 5*	Ubisoft	TBA
Resident Evil: Revelations	Capcom	2012
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	Sega	2012
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	Atari	3/12
Shifting World	Aksys	SPR 12
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Sudoku Premier Edition	Majesco	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tales of the Abyss	Namco Bandai	2/12
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	Namco Bandai	2012
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA

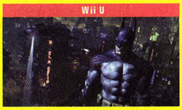
READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. Mario Party 9
2. Rhythm Heaven Fever
3. The Amazing Spider-Man
4. Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII
5. Men in Black

Wii U



1. Batman: Arkham City
2. Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge
3. LEGO City Stories
4. Battlefield 3
5. Tekken*

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. Luigi's Mansion 2
3. Kid Icarus: Uprising
4. Animal Crossing*
5. Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

DOWNLOAD

IN THIS SECTION

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Pokédex 3D
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOAD PREVIEW
Mighty Switch Force

WIIWARE REVIEWS
100-IN-1 EXPLOSIVE MEGAMIX
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HORIZON RIDERS

DSIWARE REVIEWS
1001 BLOCKBUSTERS
CASTLE CONQUEROR–REVOLUTION
FURRY LEGENDS

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
BURGER TIME DELUXE
CATRAP
DOUBLE DRAGON
SIDE POCKET
N3DS DOWNLOAD REVIEWS
PYRAMIDS

OFF
SELECT
HOME
START
POWER
X
Y
A
B

Expect upgrades to both the StreetPass Mii Plaza and the Nintendo eShop.

Internet
13
6/7 (Tue) 10:00
Nintendo eShop

More Features, More Fun

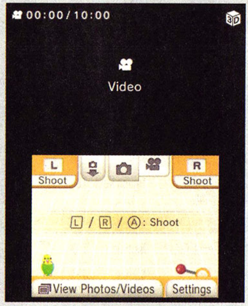
Nintendo Zone, 3D video recording, and more are all part of the latest Nintendo 3DS system update.

WANT TO ADD a bunch of new functionality to your Nintendo 3DS handheld? Then head online with your system via a Wi-Fi connection to take advantage of the latest system update, which should be available for download soon (if it isn't already available by the time you read this). The update adds a plethora of enhancements for your gaming and entertainment pleasure, not the least of which is 3D video recording; users will be able to record up to 10 minutes of 3D footage, as well as create their own 3D stop-motion-animation videos. Additionally, QR code functionality will be improved, users will be able to transfer game files between Nintendo 3DS systems, and new puzzles and an extra Find Mii dungeon will be added to the StreetPass Mii Plaza.

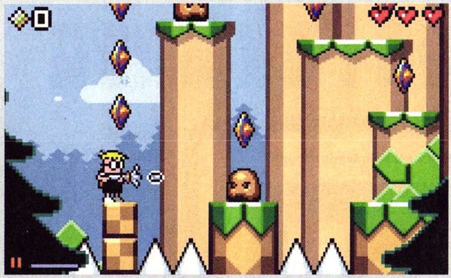
The Nintendo eShop will be expanded as well; you'll soon have access to game demos (for both downloadable and retail games) and add-on content, plus you'll be able to download software while your system is in Sleep Mode. The eShop will also support Download Codes (which will be used primarily for special promotions) and will enable users to save payment information to their system if they so desire.

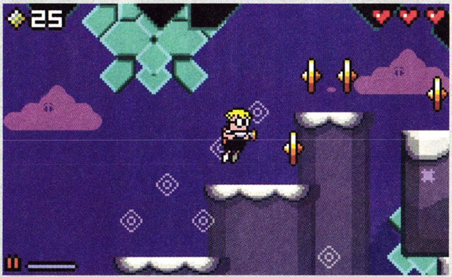
Furthermore, the update will add a new application to your system's Home Menu: Nintendo Zone. Active when you're at a Nintendo 3DS hotspot location (there will be more than 28,000 of them across the US and Canada by the time the update goes live), Nintendo Zone provides free access to a variety of exclusive content, including streaming 3D videos (such as game trailers and TV ads), trivia games (featuring titles like Super Mario 3D Land and Pokémon Rumble Blast), and retailer promotions. You'll know you're in a hotspot when the Nintendo Zone icon on the Home Menu starts blinking, and you can find locations at www.nintendo.com/3ds/hotspots.

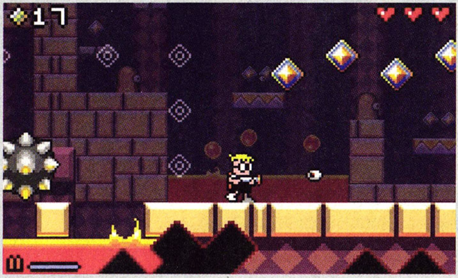
To upgrade your Nintendo 3DS with the latest features, make sure you have a Wi-Fi connection enabled, then enter the System Settings menu, select Other Settings, and scroll to the fourth page where you can select System Update. **—CHRIS H.**

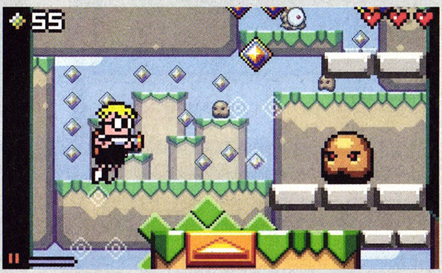


See the video camera icon? That's right—3D video recording is here!





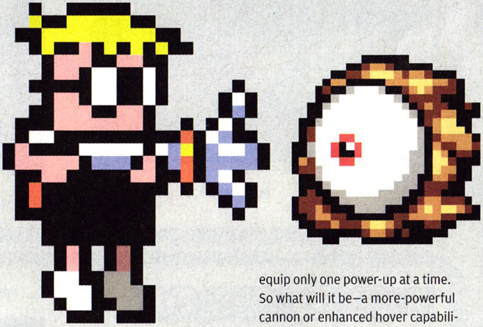




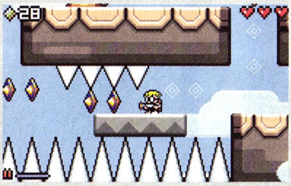
[Below] Look at all those shiny, precious Golden Diamonds in the background. Max wants them, but he needs to kill a vicious mudball first.

Playing Dirty

In eShop game Mutant Mudds, it's one boy against an army of filthy foes.



THE NINTENDO ESHOP is fast becoming the place to go for games with a retro influence. As we revealed in our first look at the game in Vol. 268, Mutant Mudds—a pixelated platformer from indie developer Renegade Kid—is one such title. The game tells the story of Maximilian, a kid who must save the world from hordes of invading mud monsters. Armed with only a water cannon and a bubble-powered jetpack, Max fights his way through 40 devious levels.



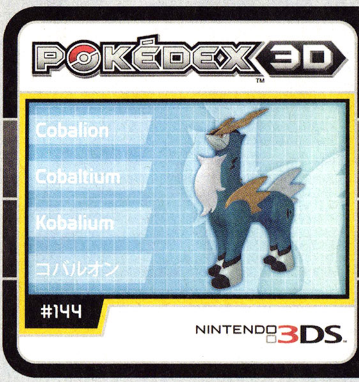
Now that we've gotten some hands-on time with the game, we've discovered that there's more to it than initially meets the eye. At first the stages seem fairly straightforward. They're filled with the typical patrolling enemies, moving platforms, environmental hazards, and collectibles. Before long, though, the true (ahem) depth of the game is revealed when you stumble across an arrow pad on the ground. Jumping on one of these launches Max into the stage's background or foreground, where new challenges and treasures await.

Max isn't the only one who can travel between planes, however. Certain enemies can bounce between the two at will, so you must take care to avoid damage. This multiplane approach to platforming is highly reminiscent of Nintendo's outstanding Virtual Boy classic, Wario Land. It also perfectly complements the stereoscopic 3D graphics—each of the stages' three layers truly pops.

Additionally, every stage contains 100 Golden Diamonds to collect. Tracking them down might seem unnecessary, but the hunt is well worth your time. Max's grandmother operates a store in the game's hub world where she sells upgrades to Max's weapons. The trick is, you can equip only one power-up at a time. So what will it be—a more-powerful cannon or enhanced hover capabilities? Choose wisely, as you'll need these special items to find each level's hidden exit, which leads to a secret level. These bonus rounds are filled with clever homages to the portable games that helped inspire Mutant Mudds' gameplay.

Although it certainly has plenty of retro appeal with its blocky graphics and bouncy chiptunes, Mutant Mudds doesn't rely strictly on nostalgia to succeed. It's a promising title in its own right. We look forward to playing more of the game when it's released early next year. **—PHIL T.**

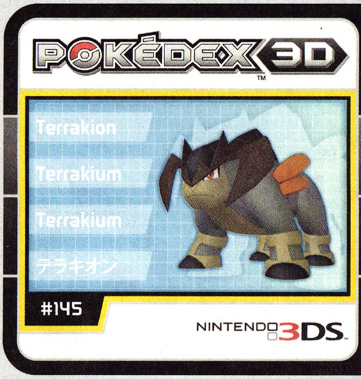
A Trio of Terrific Pokémon


POKÉDEX 3D™
Cobalion
Cobaltium
Kobalium
コバルオン
#144
NINTENDO 3DS

FREE via the Nintendo eShop!

© 2011 Pokémon/Nintendo.

View with the *Pokédex 3D* application.


POKÉDEX 3D™
Terrakion
Terrakium
Terrakium
テラキオン
#145
NINTENDO 3DS

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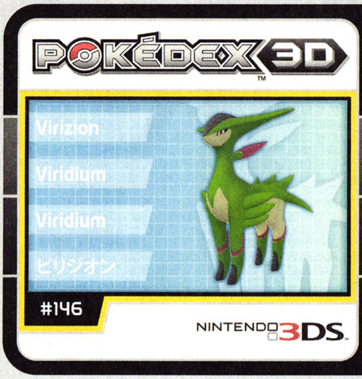
View with the *Pokédex 3D* application.


POKÉDEX 3D™
Virizion
Viridium
Viridium
ビリジオン
#146
NINTENDO 3DS

FREE via the Nintendo eShop!

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View with the *Pokédex 3D* application.

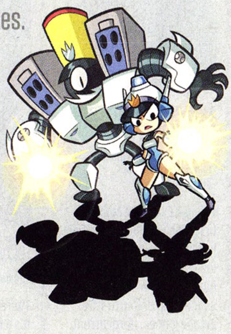
Stuff your Pokédex 3D stocking with three—count 'em, *three*—Legendary Pokémon!

THIS MONTH WE conclude our series of Pokémon AR Markers with not one, but *three* new Pokémon for your Pokédex 3D—Cobalion, Terrakion, and Verizion—which will be treasured additions to any fan's collection. You can receive these Legendary Pokémon over SpotPass only after you have scanned their Pokémon AR Markers with your Nintendo 3DS system (unless you can get them from a buddy who already has them, that is). From here on out, we'll leave it to you to fill in the remaining slots in your Pokédex 3D collection, but here's one last bit of advice: if you run into trouble obtaining the Pokémon you want, head over to www.pokemon.com/pokedex3d and click on the "Pokémon AR Markers" menu option. By the end of December, *all* of the Pokémon AR Markers will be viewable and printable there. Good luck!

—CHRIS S.

The Future of Law Enforcement

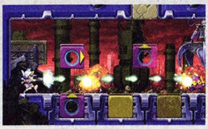
Nintendo eShop title Mighty Switch Force will test your mind as much as your reflexes.

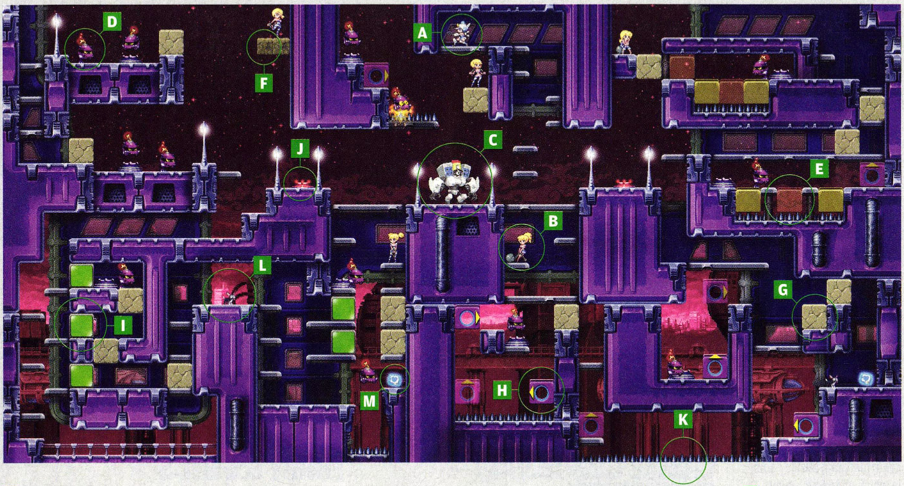


WAYFORWARD MADE A big splash on the downloadable scene with such titles as Shantae: Risky's Revenge, Mighty Flip Champs, and Mighty Milky Way. Now the third entry in the Mighty series—Mighty Switch Force—is on its way. In this game, you play as Patricia Wagon, a spunky robot member of the Galactic Penal Squad. Her job is to repeatedly track down and capture the five Hooligan Sisters, the nefarious (yet saucy) ringleaders of the aptly named Space Hooligans.

Although there is a strong emphasis on action in Mighty Switch Force, each level is also built around a series of puzzles that usually involve manipulating blocks with Patricia's Switch power. This causes certain blocks to move between the background and foreground, allowing her to climb to new areas or redirect enemies. A well-timed switch can even destroy an enemy by smacking the foe straight into the screen.

As you play through Mighty Switch Force, ample creative thinking is required to properly manipulate the environment. For some examples of the many challenges you'll be facing, take a look at our map of one of the early stages. It will definitely help out when this game is released in the very near future. (It may even be out by the time you read this.) **—PHIL T.**





A Patricia Wagon
The star of the game. She's armed with a laser pistol and a helmet that can activate switches.

B Hooligan Sister
The five Hooligan Sisters are scattered throughout each level. Your job is to find 'em.

C Extraction Robot
Once all five sisters have been apprehended, this hulking mech arrives. Find him, and the level ends.

D Bombs
These walking bombs will detonate if they're shot, crushed, or thrown into a wall. You'll need to blow them up to bypass obstacles.

E Switch Blocks
Get familiar with these brown blocks. You'll move them from the background to the foreground (and vice versa) throughout the game.

F Small Blocks
These blocks can be destroyed with Patricia's gun.

G Large Blocks
Too strong for simple laser fire, these big blocks can be smashed only with a bomb.

H Arrow Blocks
Use these blocks to launch enemies—or Patricia—in the direction of the arrow.

I Green Blocks
Although Patricia can't walk through these green blocks, her laser blasts will pass through them.

J Land Mines
Stepping on these land mines is—as you might imagine—a bad idea.

K Spikes
You've played video games before. Stepping on spikes means instant death.

L Dog
These loveable pooches act as continue points, so be sure to track them down.

M Heart
Grab one of these spinning icons to refill a heart in Patricia's health meter.

EVALUATION STATION

WIIWARE

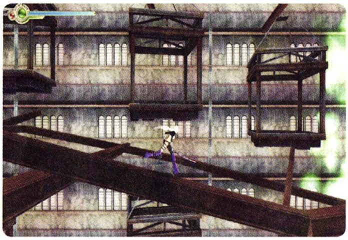
100-IN-1 EXPLOSIVE MEGAMIX

PUBLISHER: **NORDCURRENT**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
PRICE: **700 POINTS**

101-in-1 Explosive Megamix first reared its head as a widely disliked DS title in 2009—a love letter to quantity over quality, it offered DS buyers a mountain of fourth-rate arcade games. Nordcurrent, eager to squeeze more blood from that turnip, now offers these wares to Wii players. Not surprisingly, the results are similarly offensive, with an added twist: a sloppy conversion from touch to Wii Remote controls makes all those terrible games harder to control. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WIIWARE



ANIMA: ARK OF SINNERS

PUBLISHER: **ANIMA GAME STUDIO** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** PRICE: **1,000 POINTS**

There's a lot to like about Anima: Ark of Sinners. For one thing, it's a full-blown action-adventure game—a rarity on WiiWare—complete with cut-scenes, a variety of attack moves, and a fairly lengthy quest. For another, the game seems heavily inspired by Castlevania, including the nonlinear level design, creepy visuals, and haunting-yet-rocking soundtrack. However, it's very clear that this game is not Castlevania; whereas that series is crisp and polished, Anima is somewhat sloppy. The controls are rather loose and imprecise (this is especially noticeable in the thick of battle), and the visuals are muddy in spite of being stylish. I enjoyed the game despite these flaws, but they make it hard to give it a recommendation. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

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SCOR
3,888
x 3

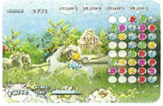
HORIZON RIDERS

PUBLISHER: **SABARASA** GENRE: **SHOOTER** PRICE: **800 POINTS**

Horizon Riders is the result of combining several great ideas in a questionable manner. The can't-miss combo of hoverboards and shooting robots appropriately boasts support for the Wii Balance Board and Zapper, respectively, but the latter falls short by requiring use of the hard-to-reach A Button to navigate menus and advance cut-scenes through an onscreen icon. While the Balance Board works well to steer, there is an option to play with just the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, with steering handled by turning the remote. This, unfortunately, makes steering while shooting a bit tricky, especially during boss battles. Despite these issues and some primitive graphics, Horizon Riders is a fun game, but it falls short of its potential. —**DAVID O.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE



FISH TANK

PUBLISHER: **IFUN4ALL**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
PRICE: **500 POINTS**

Contrary to what the name might have you believe, Fish Tank is not an aquarium simulation. Rather, it's a color-matching puzzle game in which up to four players can work together by using motion controls to steer different-colored fish into their proper horizontal rows, attempting to reach the goal within the time limit; failure to do so stops the game abruptly. Achievements, challenges, and items round out a title that is enjoyable, if not as great as others in the genre. —**DAVID O.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE

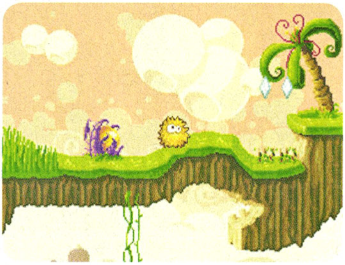
CASTLE CONQUEROR—REVOLUTION

PUBLISHER: **CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT** GENRE: **STRATEGY** PRICE: **500 POINTS/$4.99**

Joining the growing ranks of the "whack-a-mole" variety of simplified RTS games, in which war is whittled down to merely capturing and holding bases (to the exclusion of commanding individual units), Castle Conqueror offers the typical one-dimensional battle experience: you'll move troops between bases to siege or defend, as needed. Fortunately, Circle saves this effort by squeezing atypical depth into the mix; leveling up your forces, purchasing tech, dealing with morale, and wielding special moves might distract you from the general malaise. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



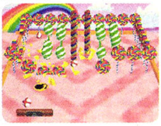
FURRY LEGENDS

PUBLISHER: **GAMELION** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** PRICE: **500 POINTS/$4.99**

I had high hopes for the WiiWare version of Furry Legends (released more than a year ago), but the game didn't end up nearly as legendary as the titles implies. Fortunately, this DSiWare follow-up (it's an all-new game, not a port) fixes a lot of its predecessor's problems. The physics feel more accurate, the storytelling is more intelligent, and the 2D hand-drawn visuals make the game much more charming. That's not to say that this platformer isn't without flaws. It moves at a lethargic pace, and the action can be slightly frustrating thanks to loads of one-hit kills and inconveniently placed checkpoints. Maybe Gamelion will nail it if this series reaches a third installment. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



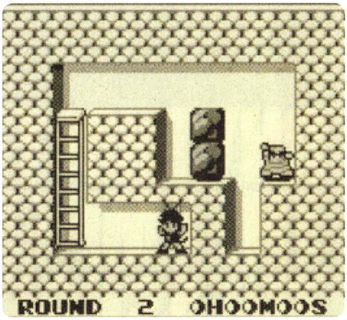
1001 BLOCKBUSTERS

PUBLISHER: SELECTSOFT
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

True to its name, 1001 BlockBusters features a whopping 1001 stages of Arkanoid-inspired brick-breaking action. With only four themes between those levels, though, you end up playing through many nearly identical-looking stages. Factor in the game's slow pace and ear-numbing elevator music, and you're left with a very tedious experience. The unrealistic physics, which often send the ball flying in odd directions, add to the disappointment. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



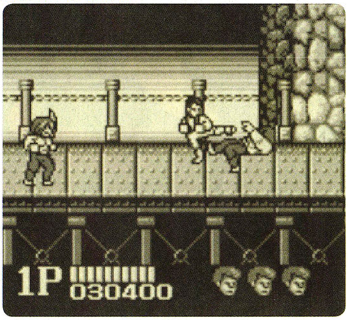
CATRAP

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1990 **PUBLISHER:** ASMIK/ASK
GENRE: PUZZLE **PRICE:** $2.99

If you haven't given any consideration to downloading Catrap, I don't blame you. It's not part of a franchise, after all, and the name is kinda odd (plus, the game doesn't even feature any rapping cats!). Pass it up, though, and you're missing out on a fine little puzzle/action game. The ability to rewind time to undo your moves minimizes frustration, but there are still plenty of clever challenges. For $3 it's great. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



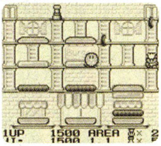
DOUBLE DRAGON

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1990
PUBLISHER: TRADEWEST/AKSYS **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** $3.99

This game does an admirable job of bringing Double Dragon's classic thug-punching action to the small screen, but it also has its share of problems. The move set lacks variety—there's little difference between performing a kick and a punch. This causes the combat to grow tiresome. The stages are also fairly short, and with just four total, you'll be done in no time. It's good for scratching a beat-'em-up itch, but just barely. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



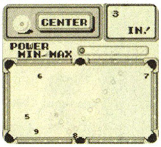
BURGER TIME DELUXE

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1991
PUBLISHER: DATA EAST/G-MODE
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $2.99

As the title suggests, this is an enhanced version of the classic arcade game. In addition to the prettier graphics, it contains multiple new stages, a variety of power-ups, and an added enemy. Burger Time has always been somewhat deliberately paced (i.e., kinda slow), but the level design results in plenty of tense situations, making for a suitable challenge. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



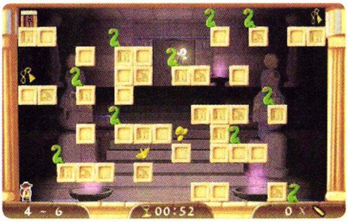
SIDE POCKET

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1990
PUBLISHER: DATA EAST/G-MODE
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: $2.99

Let's be real: old games either withstand the test of time, in which case they're justified in their own right, or they don't, in which case they need to fill your head with fond remembrances of simpler times. Side Pocket is certainly not in the first category; this is the hairy-backed caveman of pool games. As for the second category, this game mostly recalls the age of stupefying Java-based cell-phone games. Yuck. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS DOWNLOAD



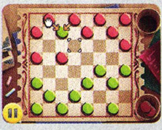
PYRAMIDS

PUBLISHER: ENJOY GAMING **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $3.99

Harkening back to the earliest platform games—many of which were riffs on Indiana Jones—Pyramids invites players to loot forgotten tombs like it's 1982. Using only jumps and the power to create/destroy stone blocks, players negotiate 2D levels rife with old-school peril—retracting spikes, fireballs, spitting snakes, and (of course) laterally fixated baddies. Your goal is straight out of every Atari 2600 game you ever played: make it to the exit after unlocking it. Bonuses are awarded for collecting treasures and beating the ruthless clock, which will have you playing levels again and again to achieve the ballet of platform perfection—just like you did when you were younger and couldn't comprehend having better things to do with your time. If this all brings a wistful look to your eye, you'd be wise to partake. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE



Four additional DSiWare titles have recently landed on the Nintendo eShop and the Nintendo DSi Shop. If you can't get enough of the ubiquitous puzzler Minesweeper, **Simply Minesweeper** (200 Points/$1.99) should float your boat.... Two game modes and three difficulty settings are available in board-game sim **Academy: Checkers** (500 Points/$4.99).... The last two House M.D. games haven't been so hot; now **House M.D. Episode 3: Skull and Bones** (800 Points/$7.99) is available.... Sad that Halloween is over? Then consider hidden-object game **Halloween: Trick or Treat** (800 Points/$7.99).

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RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE pg.30
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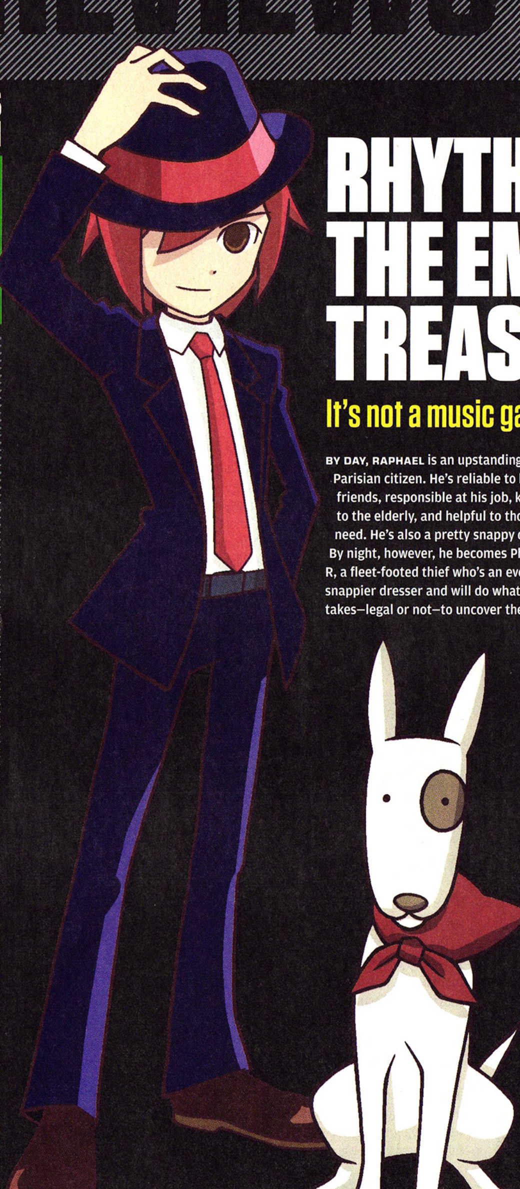
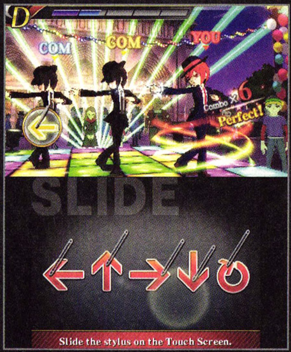


RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE

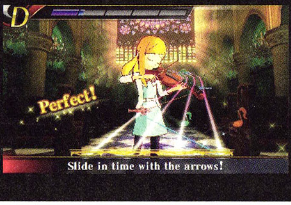
It's not a music game. It's a music adventure!

BY DAY, RAPHAEL is an upstanding young Parisian citizen. He's reliable to his friends, responsible at his job, kind to the elderly, and helpful to those in need. He's also a pretty snappy dresser. By night, however, he becomes Phantom R, a fleet-footed thief who's an even snappier dresser and will do whatever it takes—legal or not—to uncover the mysteries surrounding the disappearance of his father three years prior.

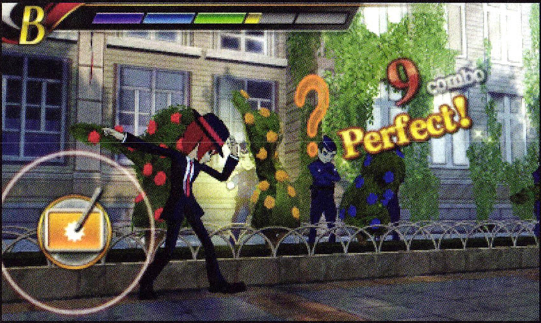
As Phantom R, Raphael's motto seems to be, "Do it with style or don't bother doing it." Every leg of his quest is about flash as much as it is about substance, and every caper turns into a jazzy, pop-infused, toe-tapping spectacle. The game begins with Phantom R entertaining

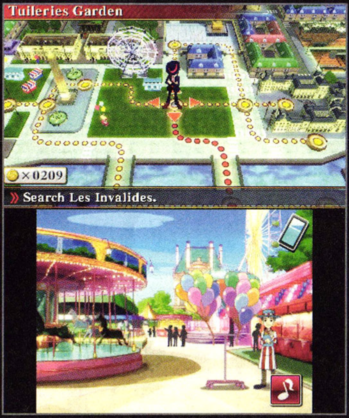


Slide the stylus on the Touch Screen.



Slide in time with the arrows!





Search Les Invalides.

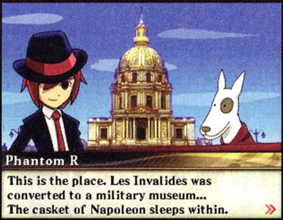
[Above] The dynamic Phantom R is a man of many talents. He can dance, he can cook, he can fight, and he can strike a mean pose.

crowds with an Elite Beat Agents-style dance performance in front of the Eiffel Tower, in which you slide the stylus up, down, left, right, or in a circle on the Nintendo 3DS system's touch screen in time to the music.

Later stages, however, feature completely different gameplay mechanics. When Phantom R decides to infiltrate the world-famous Louvre museum to obtain the Bracelet of Tiamat (it contains a clue about his father), you need to rhythmically tap colored icons so he can strike a pose and hide in the silhouettes of statues, thus allowing him to sneak in right under guards' noses. On the way out, you'll have to evade the Paris Roller Skate Brigade by jumping (press A) and sliding (press B) to the beat of the music.

When it comes to wacky action, roller-skating cops are only the tip of the iceberg. Napoleon Bonaparte has apparently returned from the dead, and for some reason he's in pursuit of both Phantom R and his newfound friend, a violinist named Marie. When Napoleon orders his henchmen (known as the Knights Diabolique) to capture the duo, you'll discover that Phantom R can fight as well as he can dance—as long as you're able to press the Control Pad and the A Button in rhythmic fashion. In other episodes you'll find yourself cooking (press the touch screen to cook the food, flick the stylus to serve it), shaking maracas à la Samba de Amigo (complete with authentic music), and battling a pesky private eye by knocking back the soccer balls he kicks toward you. You'll even get to control other characters; in one mission you'll play as Raphael's dog, Fondue, and tilt the N3DS hardware from side to side in order to catch delicious chunks of meat, and in another you'll control Marie and slide the stylus back and forth to play the violin.

But engaging in an assortment of rhythm-based activities is only part of what Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure is about. In between musical shenanigans, you'll explore the streets of Paris, visiting a variety of famous locales (including Notre Dame cathedral) and using the touch screen to investigate your surroundings and speak to other characters. By tapping the environments you can also find medals that you're able to exchange for bonus features or use to purchase power-ups that enhance your musical abilities (such as an item that prevents your "groove meter" from decreasing if you mess up).



Phantom R

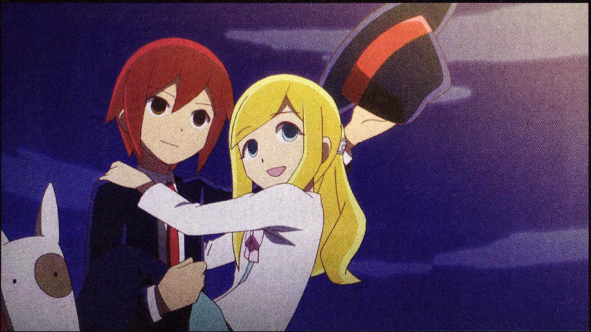
This is the place. Les Invalides was converted to a military museum... The casket of Napoleon sleeps within.

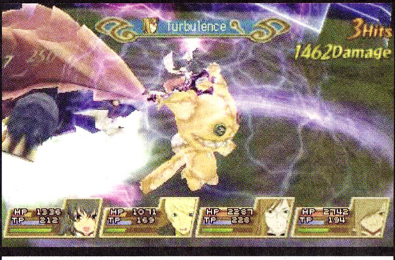
In addition, as you explore you'll be able to capture various sounds using a recording device, then use them to overcome obstacles. When you need to get through an area guarded by a timid cop, for example, you can use the sound of a growling dog to scare him away, and when you need to bypass a voice-activated lock, a recording of a snoring guard does the trick. (Don't ask us how that one works.) There are numerous puzzles to solve, too—almost all of them audio-based. In one you'll have to press buttons to play sounds from high to low, and in another you'll have to listen for tones that match each other.

To top it off, the game features some absolutely gorgeous anime cut-scenes (presented in full stereoscopic 3D) and boasts an intrigue-filled story that would give *National Treasure* a run for its money. Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure is quirky, fun, and without question one of the most promising original titles we've yet seen for Nintendo 3DS.

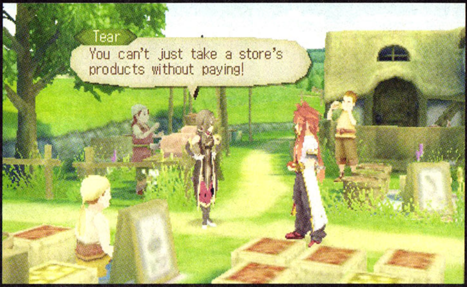
—CHRIS H.

N3DS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA
RELEASE: Q1 2012





[Right] The real world is completely foreign to the sheltered Luke.


Tear
You can't just take a store's products without paying!

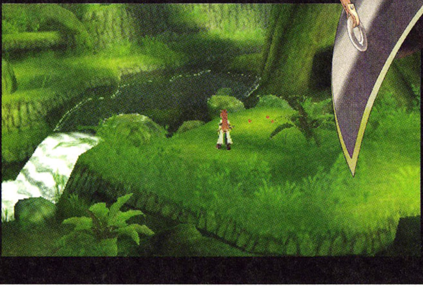
TALES OF THE ABYSS

This remastered RPG is anything but abysmal.

IT MAY BE a port of a PlayStation 2 title from 2006, but Tales of the Abyss for Nintendo 3DS still has the NP crew stoked. For one, it's only the second full-fledged role-playing game to hit the N3DS (the first being Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked). For another, many of us haven't played Tales of the Abyss before. This is certainly something we will rectify when the handheld game launches, as what we've played so far has us craving more.

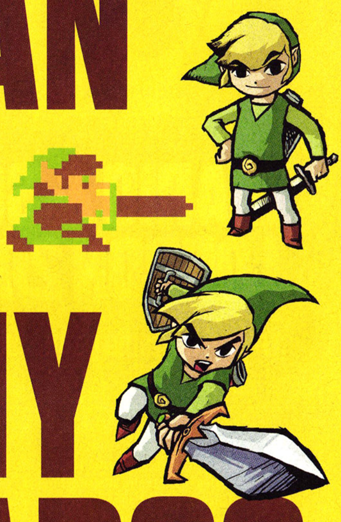
Tales of the Abyss kicks off by introducing us to a red-haired 17-year-old named Luke, a self-centered young man who yearns for freedom. See, he was kidnapped seven years prior (an event that led to him losing all memories from the first 10 years of his life), and he's been locked up in his family's mansion ever since he was rescued. He is eventually liberated—accidentally—when a young woman named Tear infiltrates the mansion in an attempt to attack Luke's swordfighting instructor, Van. It turns out both Luke and Tear are Seventh Fonists, which means they hyperresonate when they come in contact with each other, thereby teleporting from the nation of Kimlasca-Lanvaldear to the rival nation of Malkuth. The two have to work together to get back home, which leads to encounters that are both humorous (due to the fact that the spoiled and sheltered Luke is ignorant of the ways of the world) and dangerous (because it wouldn't be an RPG without fighting).

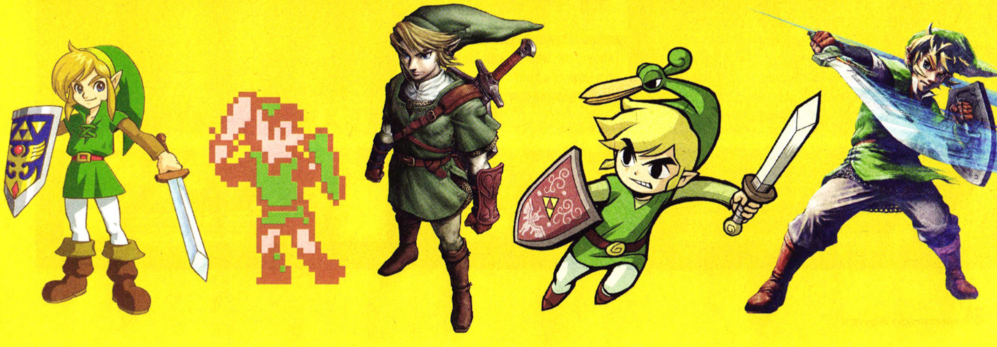
Fortunately, the combat doesn't feel like a grind, thanks to the game's all-around speedier load times and its fighting-game-esque real-time battle system. As Luke, you use the Circle Pad to move, A to strike, Y to block, and B to unleash Artes. Luke's has physical-attack-focused Artes, whereas Tear primarily uses magic to harm enemies and heal allies. What's nice about this edition of Tales of the Abyss, however, is that you can assign up to four Artes to the touch screen. This allows you to, say, use Tear's First Aid ability without opening the menu and selecting the spell and without waiting for the AI-controlled Tear to cast it. —**JUSTIN C.**

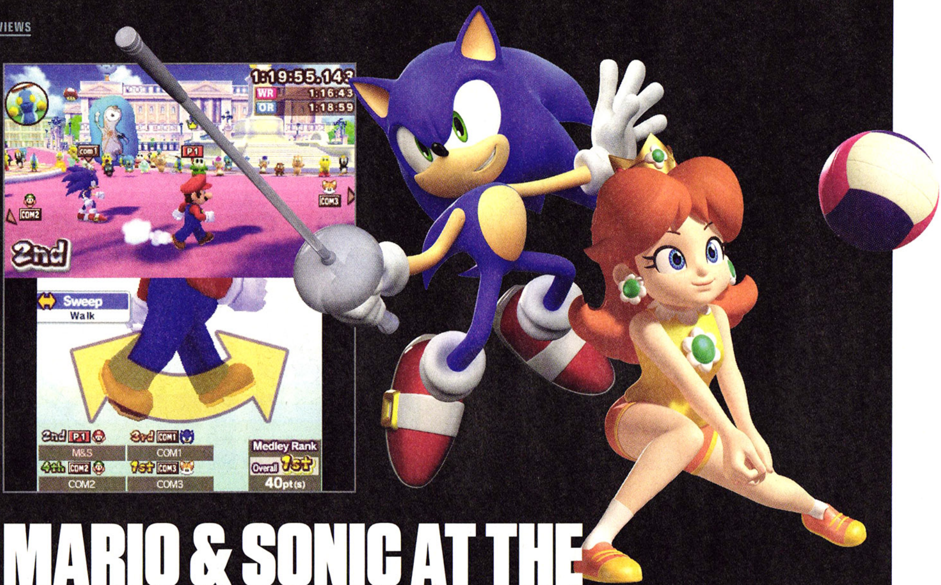


N3DS PUBLISHER:
NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER:
NAMCO TALES STUDIO
RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 2012

WHERE CAN YOU FIND THIS MANY GREEN CAPS?







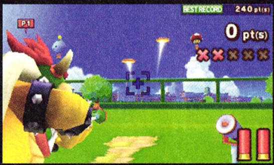
MARIO & SONIC AT THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

Let the portable games begin!

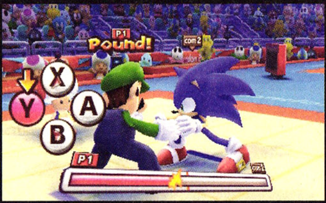
SUMMER HAS STARTED early thanks to the recent release of Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games on the Wii console, but that's not the only way to experience mascot-filled athletic competition. The title is also headed to Nintendo 3DS, and though the participants—including the likes of Mario, Princess Peach, Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Luigi, Donkey Kong, and Metal Sonic—are the same, as are some of the events, the experience is very different thanks to new modes, additional activities, hardware-specific controls, and more. In short, it's a whole new game.

Whereas the Wii title contained a respectable 31 events, the N3DS version has more than 50. Those events are spread out across 11 categories: athletics, aquatics, court and field sports, contact sports, gymnastics, cycling, equestrian, boat games, shooting, weightlifting, and multidiscipline challenges. As you'd expect, each event unfolds as its own minigame with unique controls and objectives. In the 3000m steeplechase you'll use well-timed presses of the A Button to leap over hurdles, pools of water, and even opponents who trip themselves up; in the BMX race you'll move your character via the Circle Pad and tilt the N3DS system to properly land from jumps; in judo you'll have to quickly input specific button combinations to take down your opponent; and in basketball you'll use the hardware's gyro sensor to aim and shoot for the basket from a first-person view.

Naturally, you can play these events against CPU-controlled foes, or compete with up to three friends over a local wireless connection; the game even supports single-card download play. And the action isn't limited to individual events; you can choose from an assortment of themed medleys (Footrace Medley, Gymnastics Medley, Aquatics Medley, etc.). Better yet, the game includes an extensive story mode in which Mario, Sonic, and friends must thwart an evil plot by Bowser and Dr. Eggman to ruin the Olympics. With so much content, the N3DS version of Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games just might have what it takes to bring home the gold. —**CHRIS H.**



[Above] OK, who's bright idea was it to give Bowser a gun?



PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
N3DS
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012**

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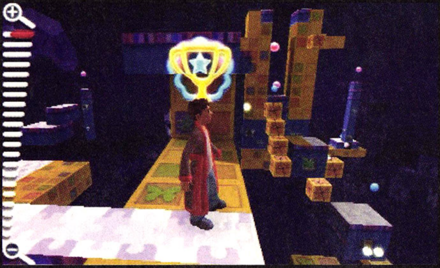
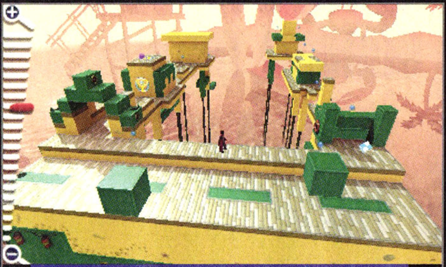
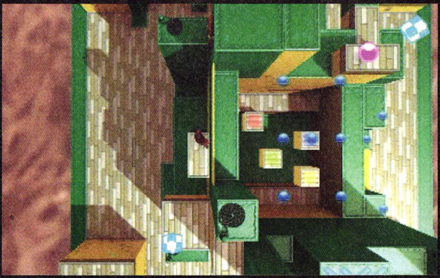
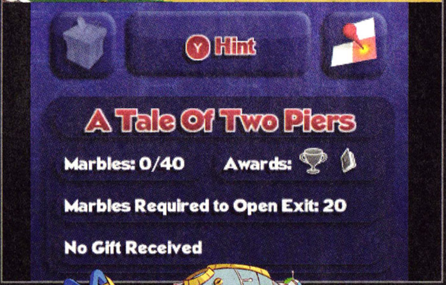








A Tale Of Two Piers

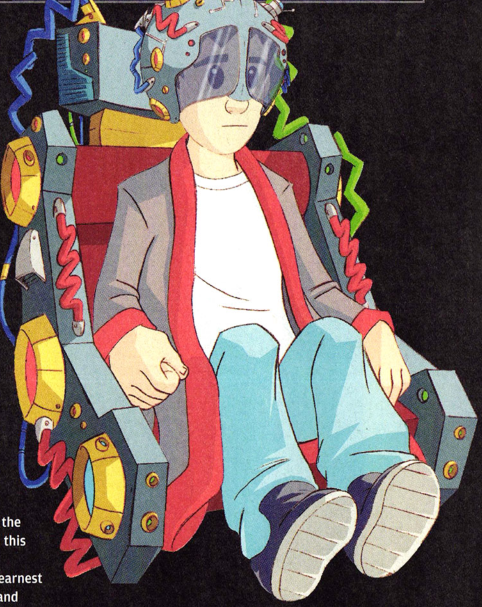
Marbles: 0/40 Awards:

Marbles Required to Open Exit: 20

No Gift Received

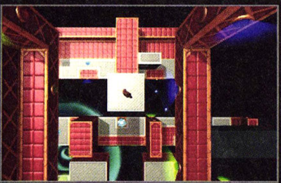
CRUSH 3D

It's all a matter of perspective.

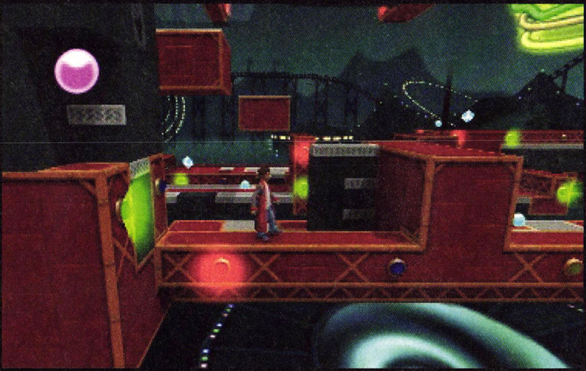


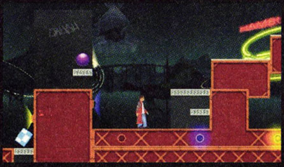
THE ORIGINAL CRUSH for PSP was a game with a great idea. Sega's 2007 puzzle-platformer allowed you to, well, *crush* the world from a 3D environment to a 2D one—and uncrush it back again—in order to access seemingly unreachable areas. Despite garnering critical acclaim, however, the title was less than a blockbuster hit. Fortunately, this cool idea lives on with Crush 3D for Nintendo 3DS.

Like the original game, Crush 3D stars Danny, a young man who serves as the guinea pig for his friend Doctor "Doc" Doccerson's mad-scientist experiments. (The developers obviously drew inspiration from the *Back to the Future* films when creating these two characters.) After several failed inventions, Doc believes he finally has something that will wow the scientific community: a machine meant to help people visualize and solve their problems. The machine is called C.R.U.S.H.—which stood for Cognitive Regression Utilizing Psychiatric Heuristics in the PSP game, but its name was not explained in the hands-on time we had with this stereoscopic iteration.



The gameplay begins in earnest once Danny is strapped in and drops into the city-themed zone C.R.U.S.H. presents. (There are also seaside, fairgrounds, and nursery-themed zones.) Here you learn the basics: you move with the Circle Pad, jump with A, crouch with B, shift the camera in 90-degree increments with the Control Pad, and crush/uncrush with L. With these tools at





your disposal, you attempt to make your way to the exit. Let's say you're on one platform and you see a floating platform that you can't reach by jumping; you can shift the camera to a perspective from which it looks like the two platforms are on the same plane, flatten the world so that they actually are, then uncrush the environment and find yourself on the platform you couldn't get to previously. Or if you encounter an impassibly high tower that you need to pass over, you can move the camera to the top-down perspective, compress everything, and saunter along the newly constructed 2D path.

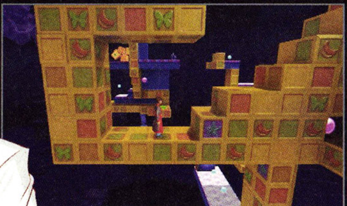
When figuring out how to reach the exit of each level, you have to take into consideration the kinds of blocks that make up your surroundings. There are three variations: ghost, hollow, and solid. Ghost blocks are gray and can be stood upon only in 3D; crush when you're standing on one, and you'll fall until you hit solid ground. Hollow blocks are also gray, but they have horizontal blue stripes on them. As with the ghost structures, you can stand in front of hollow pieces while crushing without fear of being squished. The difference between ghost and hollow blocks is that the latter have the aforementioned blue lines, which serve as platforms in the 2D world. Solid blocks are made of brick, and you'll get squashed if you crush while standing in front of them. Thankfully, it won't kill you, but the same doesn't hold true for your enemies; if there's a giant-cockroach enemy crawling in front of a solid block, you can crush it dead.

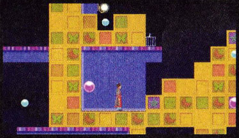
You must also keep in mind the collectibles—particularly the marbles that are peppered throughout each level. The three types of marbles are each worth a different point value: blue ones are worth 1 point, purple ones are worth 3, and red ones are worth 10. You have to acquire at least half of each level's total points to open the exit.

There's a lot to take into account when playing Crush 3D, but with more than 50 levels to experience, you'll have plenty of opportunities to get used to its intricacies. Fortunately, the game includes a helpful hint system that should help you solve the many tricky puzzles.

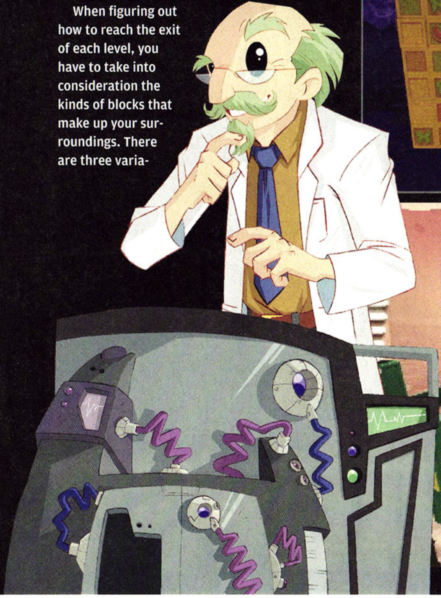
—JUSTIN C.

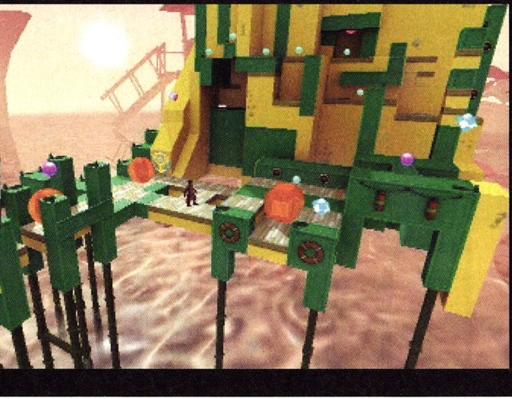
N3DS PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **ZOË MODE**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012**





Grabbing that marble may appear to be impossible [left], but crushing the world puts it within reach [above].





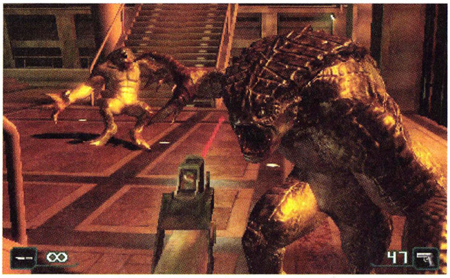
Into the Abyss

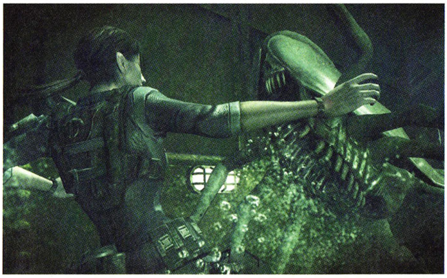
In the year or so since it was unveiled, we've covered Resident Evil: Revelations on quite a few occasions, and for good reason. The latest installment in Capcom's landmark survival-horror series may just be our most anticipated title for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. But up to this point, we've been exposed to only brief snippets of the game—a five-minute demo here and a teaser trailer there. With its release rapidly approaching, we finally got an opportunity to really spend some quality time with the M-rated Revelations. And that time was quality indeed. Having played through the game's first few hours, we're looking forward to the final product more than ever.

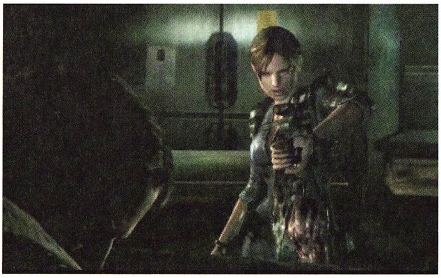
We delve deep into Resident Evil: Revelations and bear witness to survival-horror's ambitious resurrection.

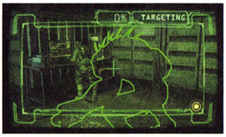
BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012** **N3DS**









[Left] Some foes can cloak like the titular alien in the film *Predator*. Use the Genesis Bio Scanner to spot them.

ONE-WAY CRUISE

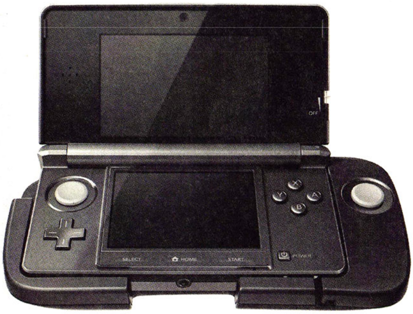
Revelations opens with longtime series heroine Jill Valentine and her new partner, Parker Luciani, as they approach a seemingly abandoned cruise ship in the Mediterranean Sea. The two are members of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance and are searching for fellow agent (and Jill's co-star in the original Resident Evil) Chris Redfield, whose last known location was aboard the dilapidated luxury liner. Fans may remember that the BSAA played a central role in 2009's Resident Evil 5. Revelations takes place a few years prior to the events of that game and details the organization's formative days.

Once aboard the ship, players take control of Ms. Valentine while the AI steers Parker. Dark, stormy skies and quiet, foreboding music immediately set a tense mood, elevated by a sense of isolation from being at sea. The atmosphere is far more reminiscent of the early games in the franchise than of the last few installments, which emphasized action and spectacle. That return to Resident Evil's roots is very much intentional, producer Tsukasa Takenaka tells us. "Capcom received feedback from fans about the series not being as scary as it once was," he explains. "So we wanted to bring horror back front and center."

Aiding that endeavor are the most stunning visuals we've yet seen on Nintendo 3DS. Horror is always most effective when you're immersed in what's happening onscreen, and advancements in Capcom's MT Framework Mobile engine help Revelations create a captivating picture. Every room within the ship boasts incredible detail and Jill's flashlight illuminates her surroundings convincingly. The polygon counts, texture work, shadows—every element of the presentation sets a new standard for the hardware, all while maintaining a steady 30 frames per second. Even Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D pales in comparison.

After giving us a few minutes to appreciate the sights in (unsettling) peace, the game reveals that Jill and Parker aren't alone on the boat

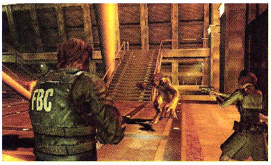
Survival Pro



Resident Evil: Revelations will support the recently announced Circle Pad Pro accessory, which snaps onto the bottom portion of the handheld and adds a second Circle Pad. Using it allows you to simultaneously move your character and manipulate the camera (or aim your weapon). We had a chance to try this control scheme for ourselves, and it makes a significant difference. The default controls work well, too, but this will likely end up being our preferred way to play the game.

after all. A hulking, pale monstrosity emerges from an air duct and swings one of its spiky, malformed appendages at our protagonists. Just at that moment, we cut away to Chris and partner Jessica Sherawat on the Mediterranean coast a few days earlier. The sudden transition serves as an introduction to the narrative's episodic, nonlinear structure. Throughout the adventure, players will jump back and forth between different characters and time periods. It's a little bit reminiscent of Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. "We wanted to create lots of cliffhangers and keep players intrigued," says Takenaka of the approach. The script was penned by popular anime writer Dai Sato, a self-described "Resident Evil *otaku*" best known for his work on *Cowboy Bebop* and *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*. In Takenaka's opinion, Revelations tells the best story of any title in the RE series.

Once in control of Chris, we're tasked with taking samples from giant, leechlike cadavers that have washed up on the beach. The task is essentially an excuse to get familiar with the Genesis Bio-Scanner, a handy tool that features prominently in the game. In addition to gleaning information about mutated, disgusting monsters, you can also use it to survey your surroundings for hidden items and ammunition. Naturally, one of the man-sized leeches comes alive during our little academic exercise, scaring the pants off us. More follow, but we make quick work of them with Chris's Handgun Bio-Piercer and Grenade Bio-Splatterer.



From there, the player reconvenes with Jill, Parker, and their ghastly assailant from the air vent. We soon discover that he's but the first example of the game's primary enemy type, created by a new strain of the T-Virus called T-Abyss. These fearsome foes are slow, but they can absorb a lot of damage and have an unnerving tendency to pop out from bathroom stalls, washing machines, and just about any other place they can squeeze into. After delving deeper into the ship, we have an unpleasant encounter with a mysterious figure in a gas mask, and episode one comes to an end.

BY LAND OR BY SEA

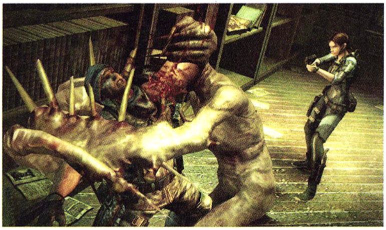
Episode two kicks off with Chris and Jessica on a snow-capped mountain range elsewhere in Europe. We detailed this particular stretch of the game in Vol. 271, but here's a recap: The duo witnesses the spectacular crash of a large cargo plane, battles undead wolves, finds a new type of ordnance called the B.O.W. Decoy (which lures enemies close before exploding), and finally discovers a secret facility belonging to the Il Veltro terrorist organization. Also, Jessica seems to spend most of her energy jealously interrogating Chris about Jill. That is, when she's not calling attention to her own "sweet" derriere.

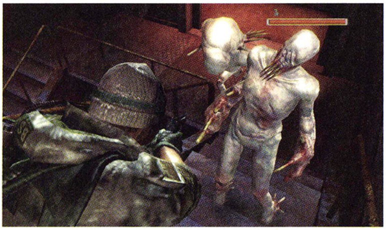
SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

Role-Playing Evil

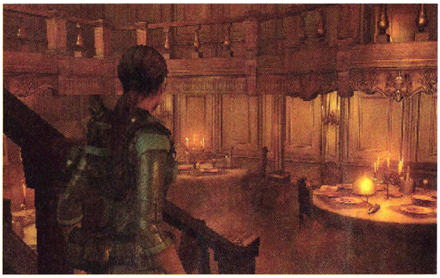
In addition to the story-driven campaign, Revelations offers a new Raid mode in which the goal is to simply purge bite-sized levels of their monster populations. Players choose a character, loadout, and destination, then head out either solo or with a friend (via local wireless or online play). That's probably starting to sound a lot like The Mercenaries, but Raid sets itself apart with some concepts borrowed from online RPGs. There are variations on each type of enemy, for example, including little buggers that move quickly and foes that are especially resilient to ballistics.

Then you've got "loot" in the form of weapons and custom parts. Enemies drop these goodies at random when they're defeated, and you'll earn a new weapon at the completion of each stage, with the firearm's level and parameters determined in part by your performance. You'll also accumulate bonus points that can be used to purchase all sorts of items at the in-game store. Our brief hands-on experience with Raid mode was entertaining, but only time will tell if it can keep us hooked over the long haul.





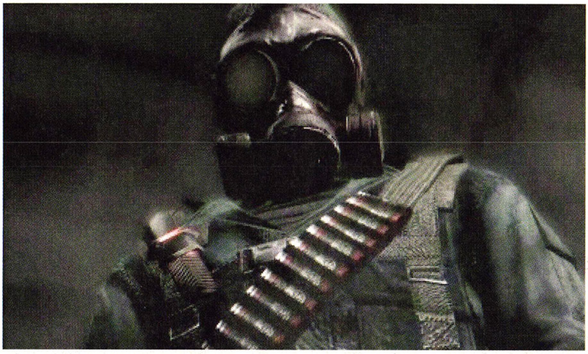
Our old friend Chris might want to find a bigger gun.



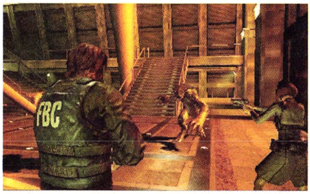
Afterward we head back to the cruise ship with Ms. Valentine, who awakens in one of the guest quarters with no recollection of how she got there. To make matters worse, all of her weapons are missing and Parker radios in to let her know he just woke up on the opposite side of the boat. As we begin searching the room, one of the T-Abyss monsters leaps out from the wardrobe (scaring off our backup trousers). The game conspicuously takes that opportunity to remind us of the dodge maneuver (press B and up or down on the Circle Pad). We try it while inadvertently standing in front of a television, and to our pleasant surprise, the creature ends up putting its head through the TV screen, incapacitating itself in the process.

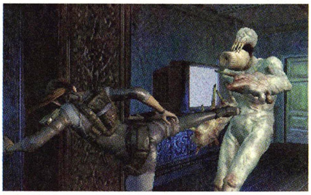
As if our journey thus far hadn't sufficiently put us on edge, the tension skyrockets once we start roaming the ship unarmed. Fortunately, we get pretty adept at dodging, and after a few minutes, we reunite with Parker—and, more importantly, with Jill's arsenal. We also find our first set of custom parts, which can be used to upgrade firearms at specially marked waypoints. Depending on the parts, players can improve a gun's capacity, reload speed, rate of fire, and more. Each weapon supports a limited number of parts, however, so it's important to distribute them wisely.

The remainder of the episode is highly evocative of the first Resident Evil. There's quite a bit of exploration involved and the décor bears a striking resemblance to that of the Arklay mansion. One big difference, though, is that your inventory is divided into categories. So rather than having you manage all of your belongings within an overall number of slots, Revelations specifically limits you to three guns, four subweapons, five herbs, etc. And though you can store extra weapons at those aforementioned waypoints, there are no longer item boxes in which to house your other excess possessions. Nor are there any typewriters; your progress is saved automatically at certain points and between episodes.



[Above] This mysterious figure seems to be the head of the Il Veltro terrorist organization.





wonder, though, whether any familiar faces beyond Chris and Jill might show up. "While this isn't a numbered Resident Evil," responds Takenaka, "it does deal very closely with other games in the series, and particularly Resident Evil 5. It interweaves a lot with the events of that game. So while I can't say exactly who's going to show up, you can definitely look forward to connections between Revelations and other Resident Evil titles. It should be a lot of fun for fans of the series." Returning characters or no, that seems to us a safe bet at this point.

ON THE HUNT

The opening chapter of episode three sets the calendar back about a year, during Il Veltro's bioterror attack on the city of Terragrigia. Parker is the playable character during this portion of the game, which takes place at the headquarters of the Federal Bioterrorism Commission in Terragrigia. Accompanied by Jessica, we're tasked with making it to the facility's rooftop helipad while fighting off swarms of Hunters (the sharp-clawed monsters from the original RE). The focus on gunplay actually feels a lot like Resident Evil 5 here, and it's a nice little change of pace from the previous sections. The Hunters keep coming fast and furious, smashing through windows and leaping out of elevators, but Parker's machine gun proves the perfect remedy.

Once we get to the chopper, a breathtaking CG cinematic showcases the total destruction of Terragrigia, ordered by the government to contain the bioweapon threat. (Sound familiar?) It's that moment, we learn, that sets the rest of the game's events into motion. The cut-scene also exemplifies the impressive resources Capcom has put into Revelations; it may very well be the most ambitious handheld title we've ever seen.

Episode three—and our demo—concludes with Jill and Parker back on the cruise ship. The two are trying to bring the vessel's communication systems back online, but they run into a little trouble along the way—namely, a new type of T-Abyss monster that can fire bones as projectiles, followed by the game's first major boss. This mutated, overweight blob of concentrated ugliness has a hand shaped like a table saw, which he can use to separate Jill's left half from her right if he gets close enough. To make matters worse, he seems to attract an endless parade of fellow baddies. Fortunately, the area is large enough for us to employ some hit-and-run tactics, but even with that and the explosive canisters conveniently placed nearby, we barely survive the encounter.

Though coy about what comes next, Takenaka does reveal that Revelations will feature a fourth playable hero—newcomer Keith Lumley—who he affectionately describes as "sort of a nerdy dude." The sizable cast also includes a number of nonplayable characters making their series debuts. We

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

Nintendo brings its brilliant and bizarre music-minigame series to Wii with **Rhythm Heaven Fever**, and the only way to beat the heat is with more button-tapping.

Feel the Rhythm

THERE ARE NO PLASTIC INSTRUMENTS. There are no top-100 songs. There are, however, monkeys lobbing golf balls, machines screwing robots' heads onto their bodies, and pigs spinning their chairs during a board meeting. Suffice it to say Rhythm Heaven Fever for the Wii console is unlike any rhythm game you've ever played—unless you've played its portable predecessor, Rhythm Heaven, that is.

Like that 2009 Nintendo DS game, Rhythm Heaven Fever is composed of a wide array of bite-sized minigames that require that you tap to the beat of each stage's song. Obviously there's no touch screen to tap on Wii, so you press A—or A and B together, depending upon the stage—on the Wii Remote controller. It might seem odd that you don't use the motion-control capabilities of the remote, but we quickly discovered that success in this title requires the speed and precision that only come from button presses.

Before you can dive into the main game modes, though, you're presented with Rhythm Test. The first exam instructs you to tap A as you hear a beeping sound and see a dot drop on a graph. Every time you press A, the dot stops somewhere on the chart. If it's anywhere above the light-green line, you're tapping too early; if it's below, you're too late. If the dot is exactly on the line, congratulations are in order—you've got the timing down. The second of the two exams isn't quite as simple. The game counts down from seven, and you press A when it hits zero. In the beginning, a beeping sound accompanies each number in the countdown; as the test goes on, the beeps and numbers start to disappear. Furthermore, the game's three mascots—a blue fellow wearing glasses, a white creature with a big mouth, and a pink lass with a bow on her head—hold up signs that collectively read, "Test in progress," which obstructs your view of the chart. These factors combined mean you can't lean on audio or visual cues—you have to rely on your sense of rhythm. Fortunately, this is not a pass-or-fail test; it's purely for self-diagnostic purposes.

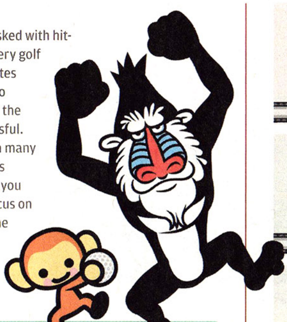
Progressing through the rest of game depends entirely on your level of success in each minigame; you must earn anything other than the bottom-tier Try Again rank to unlock the next stage. This is not always an easy task, despite what the title's cartoony appearance might suggest. But as our look at Rhythm Heaven Fever's first 10 minigames illustrates, it is always wacky, weird, and—most importantly—fun. (Note: All screenshots are from the Japanese version of the game.)

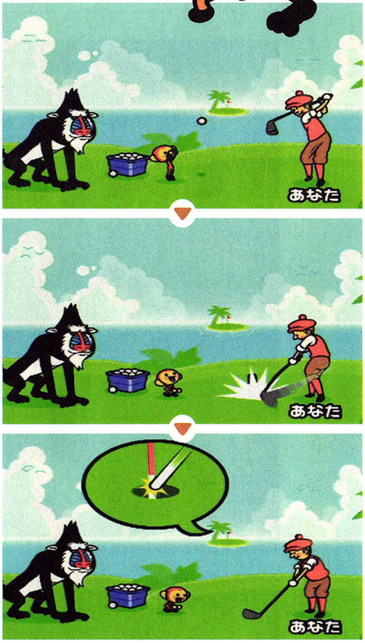
BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012** Wii

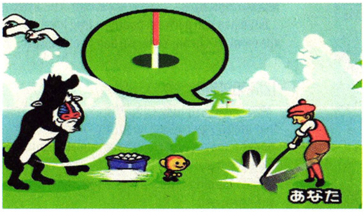
Hole in One

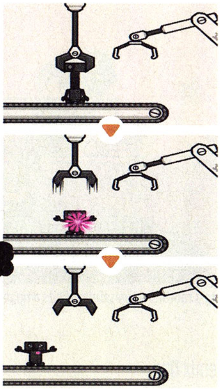
You are a golfer who's tasked with hitting a hole in one with every golf ball that these two primates toss your way. You have to tap A along to the beat of the stage's song to be successful. In fact, as is the case with many of Rhythm Heaven Fever's minigames, it might help you to close your eyes and focus on the audio—particularly the sounds the monkeys make, as they telegraph their actions.

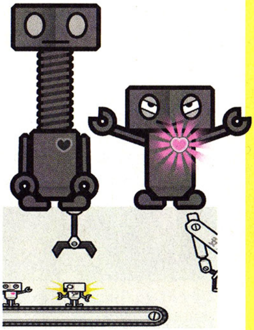




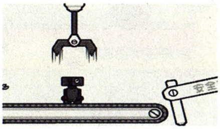
[Below] In addition to the little monkey, you have to watch for the mandrill standing off to the side. The mandrill rolls giant golf balls toward you at high velocity.







Hold A and B too long, and you'll break the robot's body—an easy thing to do with the white robots due to their short necks.



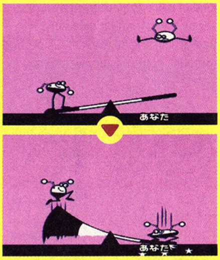
If you don't hold A and B long enough, the robot won't leave the production line happy.

Screwbot Factory

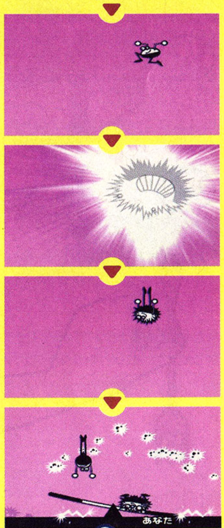
Here you are in control of a claw that screws heads onto robots' bodies, giving them life (as signified by the heart that lights up on their chests). You have to hold A and B to start the screwing action, and release the two buttons to stop. Just make sure you have the robots right under your claw before you start trying to assemble them; you can knock them over if you don't aim precisely.

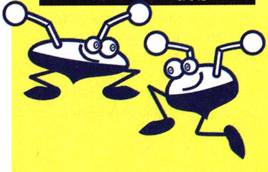
See-Saw

As a seesaw inspector, you are tasked with testing the seesaw's safety by jumping on it with your computer-controlled partner. The moment you land, you must press A to keep your balance. You don't just jump on the outer part of the seesaw, although that can lead to high jumps—you hop on the inner portion, too, which forces you to tap A at closer intervals.



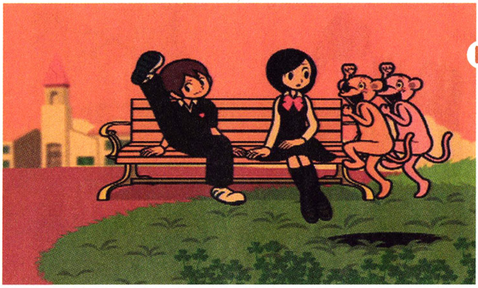
[Below] Sometimes you can get some serious air—you go so high, in fact, that you somehow become electrified, then you explosively discharge that electricity when you land.



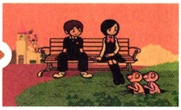


Double Date

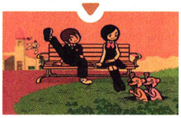
You are a young man out on his first date with the girl of his dreams. You're having a nice time, sitting on a bench outside the school and looking at the two weasels that are also on a date. Unfortunately, soccer balls, basketballs, and footballs keep coming your way. To save this double date from being ruined, you have to kick these balls off the screen by tapping A when they get close to you. Each kind of ball has a different approach: soccer balls are relatively slow, basketballs are on the faster side, and footballs bounce every which way.



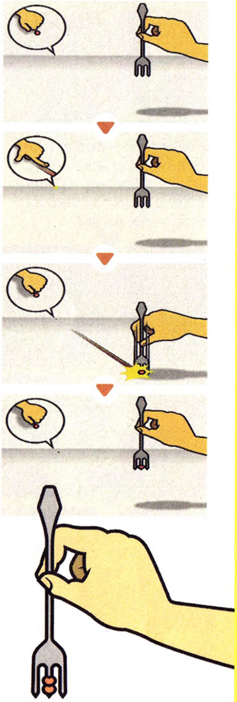
Kicking a football successfully elicits a huge reaction from the weasels.



You can also see the ball being caught by a football player...



...or being kicked by a karate master.

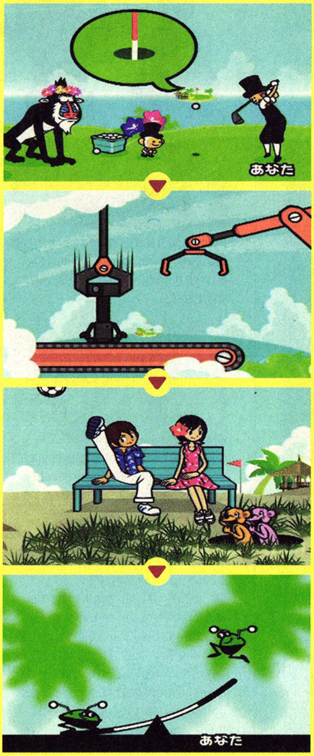


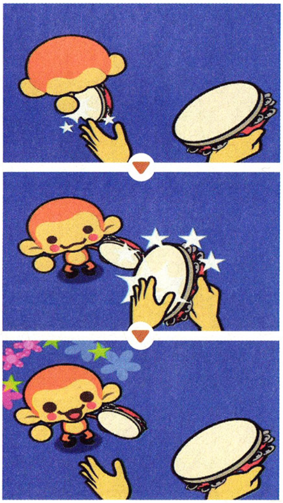
Fork Lifter

This is probably the least-efficient way to have a meal. At the far end of the table is a person who flicks what appear to be orange peas at you. You have to pierce these tiny orbs with the middle part of your fork by pressing A to jab the utensil down into the table.

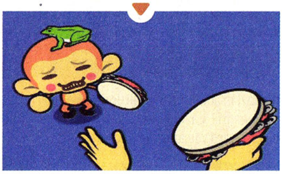
Remix One

This tropical-themed stage combines parts of the Hole in One, Screwbot Factory, See-Saw, and Double Date levels into one rapid-fire WarioWare-esque level. Note that none of the Remix stages include a practice mode (which is a standard feature of the other minigames).





The monkey is elated when you ape well...



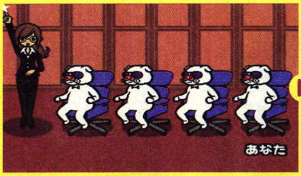
...but when you perform poorly, a frog hops on the monkey's head. Yeah, we don't get it either.

Tambourine

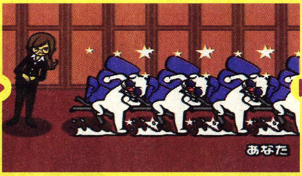
"Monkey see, monkey do," the saying goes, and that holds especially true for this minigame. A monkey shakes and claps a tambourine, and you have to follow its example by shaking (tap A) and clapping (press A and B together) along with the music.

Board Meeting

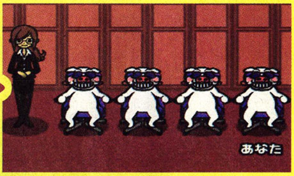
These four pig executives are living the good life, spinning their chairs and stopping in quick succession or—when the assistant gives the signal—all at once. (You hit A to bring the far-right pig to a halt.) Wait, is this minigame supposed to be some sort of metaphor?



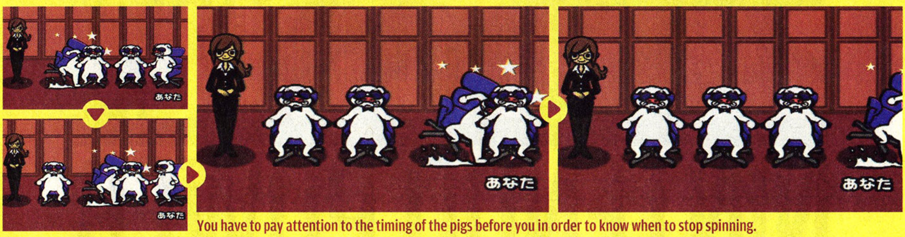
The assistant gives the signal.



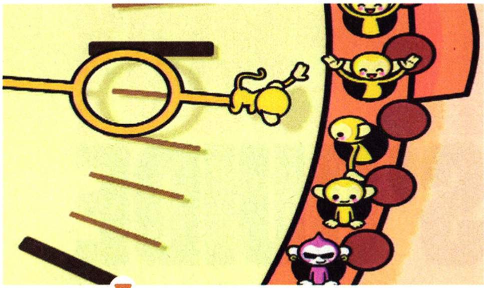
Time it right, and you'll stop at the same time as the rest of the pigs...

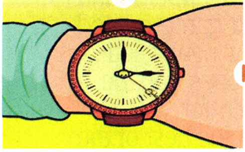


...which puts grins on their faces.

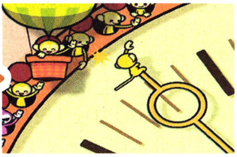


You have to pay attention to the timing of the pigs before you in order to know when to stop spinning.





The camera pulls back to reveal that you're a micro-size monkey on a human-size watch.



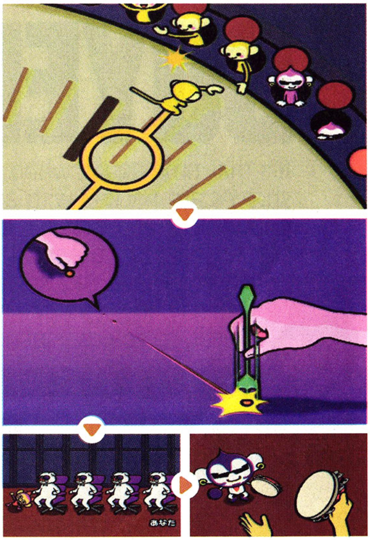
The monkey in the hot-air balloon blocks your view of the monkeys with which you're slapping five. What a jerk.

Monkey Watch

Easily the toughest minigame of the 10 we played, Monkey Watch has you controlling a monkey that's holding onto the second hand of a watch. (There sure are a lot of primates in this game.) As the second hand moves, other monkeys pop up out of the watch face; you press A to give your pals high fives as you pass them. Occasionally a couple of pink monkeys appear, and you have to hit A twice quickly in order to high-five them both.

Remix Two

Like Remix One, Remix Two combines the four minigames that precede it—Fork Lifter, Tambourine, Board Meeting, and Monkey Watch here—into one fast-paced stage. Instead of having a tropical vibe, however, Remix Two is rock-'n'-roll-themed.



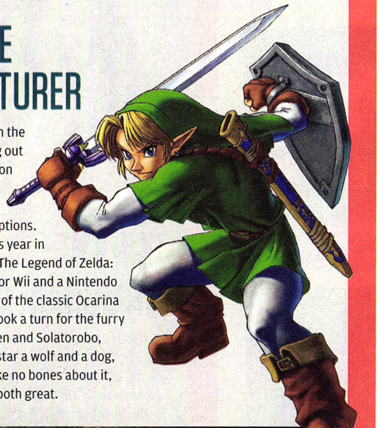
So many games! We pick the ones you need for the holidays
so you don't waste a cent (or a second of play time).

NINTENDO POWER
HOLIDAY 2011
BUYERS' GUIDE

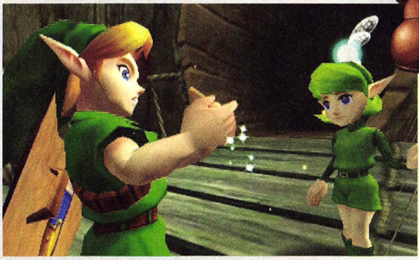
It's that time again, when stores are overflowing with shoppers—and shelves are packed with a year's worth of games (and game-related goodies). If you haven't been keeping up with every new release, sorting through them all to get to the really good ones can be a chore. That's OK, because we've done the research for you. Our holiday buyers' guide is here to help you zero in on the best of the best, so you can spend less time looking and more time playing.

BY RANDY NELSON AND THE NP CREW

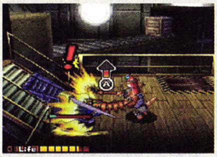
FOR THE ADVENTURER



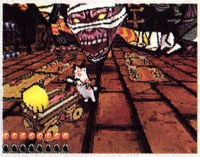
Whether you're in the mood for striking out on an adventure on a console or a handheld, there are a few great options. Link returned this year in two epic games, The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for Wii and a Nintendo 3DS remastering of the classic Ocarina of Time. Things took a turn for the furry on DS in Okamiden and Solatorobo, adventures that star a wolf and a dog, respectively. Make no bones about it, though—they're both great.



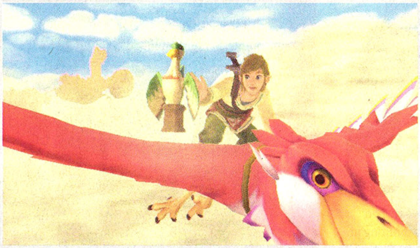
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $39.99



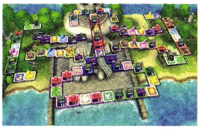
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter
Nintendo DS | Xseed
MSRP: $34.99



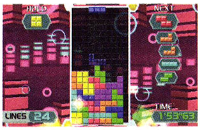
Okamiden
Nintendo DS | Capcom
MSRP: $29.99



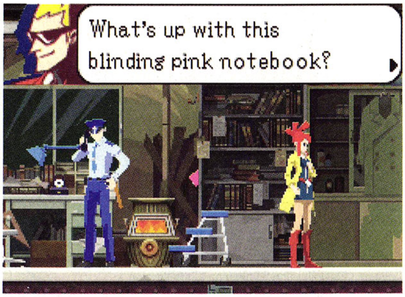
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
Wii | Nintendo | MSRP: $49.99 ($69.99 with gold Wii Remote Plus controller)



Fortune Street
Wii | Nintendo | MSRP: $49.99

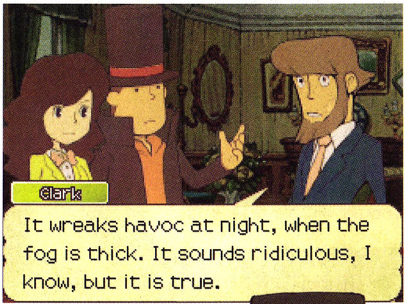


Tetris Axis
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo
MSRP: $29.99



What's up with this blinding pink notebook?

Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective
Nintendo DS | Capcom | MSRP: $29.99



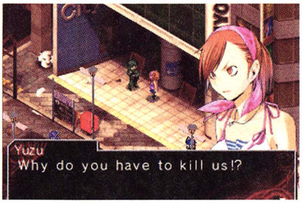
Clark

It wreaks havoc at night, when the fog is thick. It sounds ridiculous, I know, but it is true.

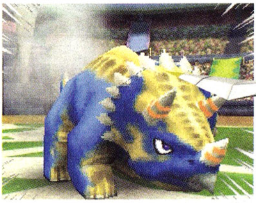
Professor Layton and the Last Specter
Nintendo DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $29.99

FOR THE THINKER

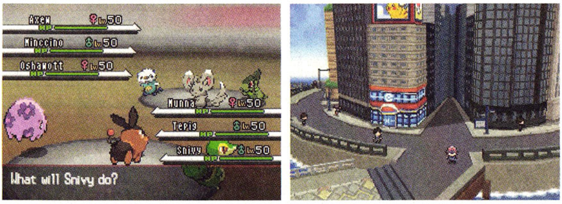
Another Professor Layton outing arrived this year on Nintendo DS in Professor Layton and the Last Specter, delivering even more noggin-scratching puzzles to solve. Capcom cast DS players as a ghost trying to solve his own murder in the inventive and ingenious Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective. Tetris made the plunge into 3D on N3DS in Tetris Axis, while fans of board games (and the stock market) can invest their time in Fortune Street for Wii.



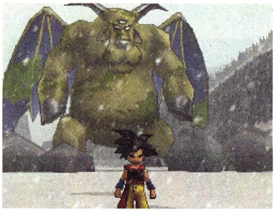
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked
Nintendo 3DS | Atlus | MSRP: $39.99



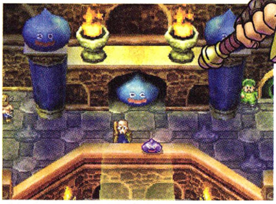
Fossil Fighters: Champions
Nintendo DS | Nintendo |MSRP: $39.99



Pokémon Black Version & Pokémon White Version
Nintendo DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $34.99



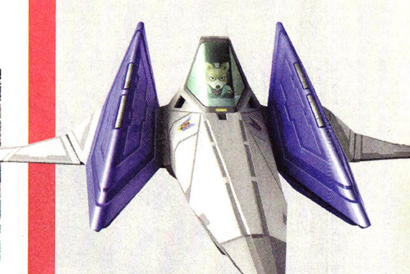
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2
Nintendo DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $34.99



Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelations
Nintendo DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $34.99

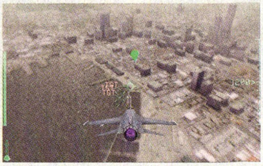
FOR THE ROLE-PLAYER

Fans of traditional RPGs had a bevy of titles to choose from on the handheld front this year. Two games in the Dragon Quest universe were released on Nintendo DS, along with the latest outing in the Pokémon series, Pokémon Black and White Versions, while dino devotees will want to dig Fossil Fighters: Champions. N3DS owners, meanwhile, should definitely check out Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked for a dose of hardcore RPG action.

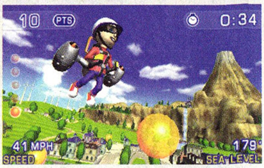


FOR THE ARMCHAIR AVIATOR

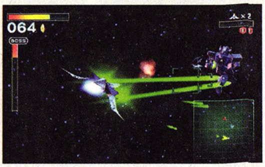
Nintendo 3DS is the handheld to own if you're after action in the wild blue yonder—or the depths of space. The system saw three solid games released in the flight-combat category this year. Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy is Namco's depth-infused spin on its classic dogfighting series, while Pilotwings marks a return by Nintendo to its classic multiaircraft Super NES and Nintendo 64 flying game. Star Fox soared once again in a remake of the N64's excellent Star Fox 64, this time with multiplayer action.



Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy
Nintendo 3DS | Namco Bandai | MSRP: $39.99



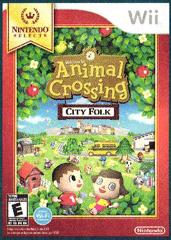
Pilotwings Resort
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $39.99



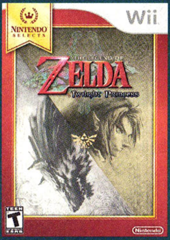
Star Fox 64 3D
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $39.99

NINTENDO SELECTS

On a budget? Nintendo Selects is a series of the best Nintendo-published Wii titles, priced at just $19.99 a pop. They might not be the newest games, but they're all incredibly fun—and worth much more than their price.

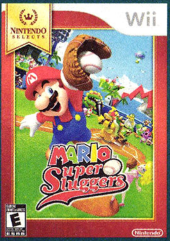


Animal Crossing: City Folk

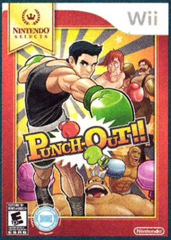


The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess

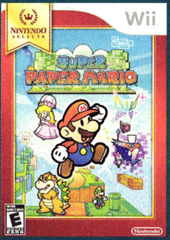
Mario Strikers Charged



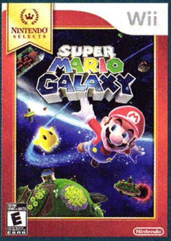
Mario Super Sluggers



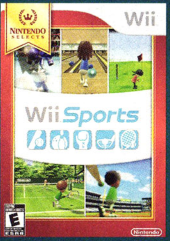
Punch-Out!!



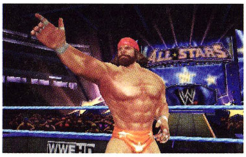
Super Paper Mario



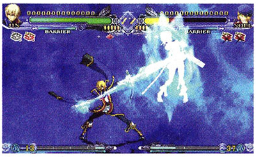
Super Mario Galaxy



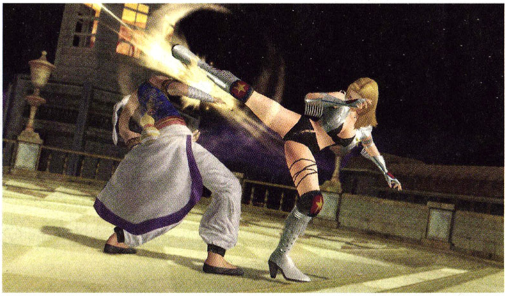
Wii Sports



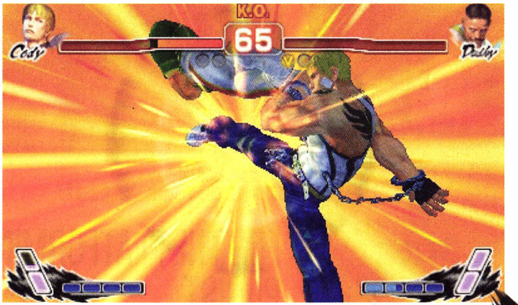
WWE All Stars
Nintendo 3DS | Publisher: THQ
MSRP: $39.99



BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II
Nintendo 3DS | Publisher: Aksys Games
MSRP: $39.99



Dead or Alive: Dimensions
Nintendo 3DS | Publisher: Tecmo Koei | MSRP: $39.99



Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition
Nintendo 3DS | Publisher: Capcom | MSRP: $29.99

FOR THE FIGHTING-GAME FANATIC

There are a few choices this year if you're looking to throw down some cash on a great new fighting game on Nintendo 3DS. Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition shines with finely tuned gameplay and go-anywhere online competition; Dead or Alive: Dimensions takes the explosive free-moving fighting series into the third dimension; BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II offers plenty of traditional 2D-fighter fun; and WWE All Stars combines the over-the-top wrestling action and legends of the WWE with tight arcade-style controls.

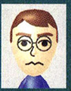
EDITORS' WISH LIST

Still don't know what to give or what to ask for? Here's what the NP crew is hoping to give and get this holiday season.

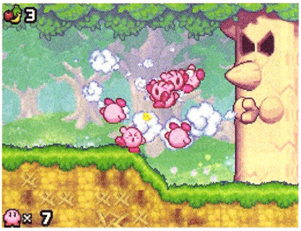
JUSTIN C.: I'm planning on giving Mario Kart 7 to a couple of my buddies so we can play together. As for what I'm asking for, I'm hoping to get the complete sixth series of *Doctor Who* on Blu-ray.

CHRIS H.: Every year I tell my family that Wii Points Cards (and now Nintendo 3DS Prepaid Cards) are perfect gifts, but they never listen. Hopefully this year. Also, I could totally go for some Mega Man and Sonic the Hedgehog music CDs from Japan.

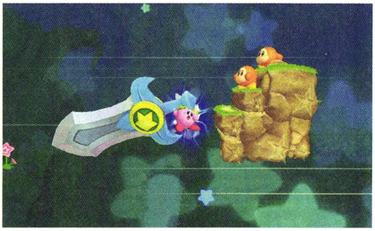
PHIL T.: Roughly nine months after I reviewed the game in Nintendo Power, it looks like Giana Sisters DS has finally been released. The wait was excruciating, but the timing is perfect. This amazing platformer will really brighten my mood this holiday season.



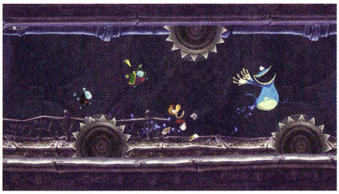
STEVE T.: I'm always looking to expand my classic-games collection, and this year my top requests are Dynamite Headdy (Sega Genesis) and Super Mario RPG (Super NES). In return, I'll be giving copies of Rayman Origins to everyone I know, regardless of whether they own a Wii console or not. The game is just that awesome.



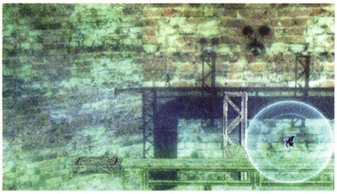
Kirby Mass Attack
Nintendo DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $29.99



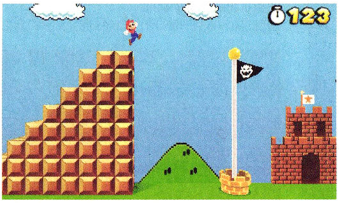
Kirby's Return to Dream Land
Wii | Nintendo | MSRP: $49.99



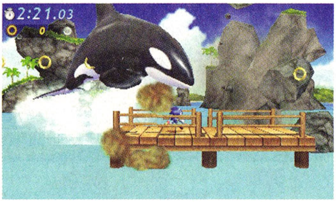
Rayman Origins
Wii | Ubisoft | MSRP: $49.99



Lost in Shadow
Wii | Konami | MSRP: $29.99



Super Mario 3D Land
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $39.99



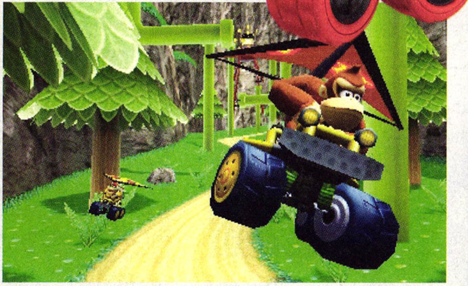
Sonic Generations
Nintendo 3DS | Sega | MSRP: $39.99

FOR THE PLATFORMING PURIST

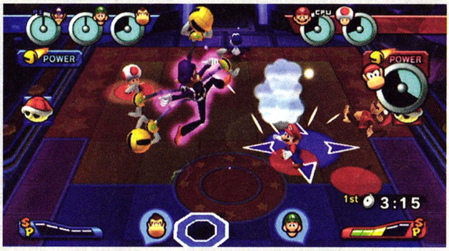
New games starring beloved platform game heroes hit in 2011—and they were great! Super Mario 3D Land takes the portly plumber to Nintendo 3DS in a huge (and literally deep) new adventure, while Rayman and Sonic the Hedgehog return to their roots in Rayman Origins and Sonic Generations. The former features gorgeous hand-drawn artwork throughout while the latter lets players relive classic levels in both traditional and modern gameplay. Additionally, Kirby made a comeback in not one, but two new games. Kirby Mass Attack for DS sees the pink puffball multiplying himself to overcome obstacles, while Kirby's Return to Dream Land on Wii puts his ability to mimic enemies to use in a vibrant platforming romp. Lost in Shadow rounds out our picks. This original title casts players as a shadow, and you must interact with other shadows to make your way through each stage.

THE BEST OF THE REST

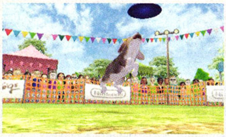
Four of the year's best games don't really fit in the same categories as the rest of our picks. Mario Kart 7 proved to be the king of the hill among racing games, delivering not only a great debut of the series on Nintendo 3DS, but exciting new flying gameplay, too. Mario also made his mark on soccer, field and ice hockey, and basketball with Mario Sports Mix for Wii. Shooter fans will want to take the plunge with Steel Diver, an N3DS game that is the next best thing to owning your own submarine.



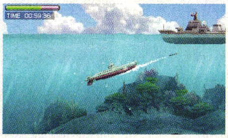
Mario Kart 7
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo | MSRP: $39.99



Mario Sports Mix
Wii | Nintendo | MSRP: $49.99



nintendogs + cats
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo
MSRP: $39.99



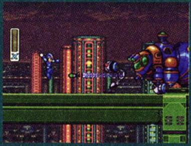
Steel Diver
Nintendo 3DS | Nintendo
MSRP: $39.99

ON THE DOWNLOAD

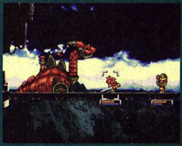
Wii / NINTENDO DS
2000

Between the Wii Shop Channel, the Nintendo eShop, and the Nintendo DSi Shop, Nintendo offers upward of 1,000 downloadable titles for its console and handheld platforms. Via the Wii Shop Channel users can download original WiiWare titles and classic Virtual Console games, while the eShop contains a mix of original games, DSiWare games (also available on the Nintendo DSi Shop), and Virtual Console releases. Oh, and 3D Classics, too. Wii Points Cards, Nintendo DSi Points Cards, and Nintendo 3DS Prepaid Cards (all available in $20 increments) make perfect stocking stuffers—there are even limited-edition cards adorned with The Legend of Zelda artwork. Additionally, you can send WiiWare and Virtual Console games to other Wii owners as gifts; here are some of our favorites from the recent past.

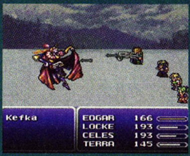
Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



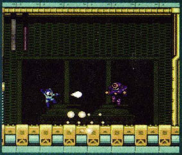
Mega Man X
Capcom
MSRP: 800 Wii Points



Chrono Trigger
Square Enix
MSRP: 800 Wii Points

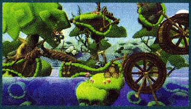


Final Fantasy III
Square Enix
MSRP: 800 Wii Points

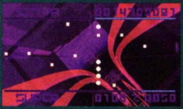


Mega Man 5
Capcom
MSRP: 500 Wii Points

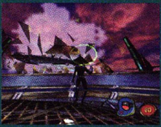
WiiWARE



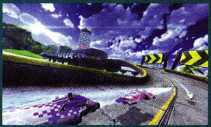
MotoHeroz
RedLynx
MSRP: 1,500 Wii Points



Bit.Trip Flux
Aksys Games
MSRP: 800 Wii Points



MDK2
Interplay
MSRP: 1,000 Wii Points



FAST Racing League
Shin'en
MSRP: 1,000 Wii Points

HARDWARE TO HAVE

With the Wii U coming in 2012, Nintendo is using this holiday season to revamp the inner workings of the existing Wii and brighten up the Nintendo DSi line with a couple of new colors.

The new Wii bundle ($149.99) features a black console and controller, and a copy of New Super Mario Bros. Wii, plus a Super Mario Galaxy soundtrack. The system looks nearly the same as the original, but it has ditched compatibility with GameCube games, which means the GameCube controller ports and memory-card slots are gone. Two new bundles are also being debuted for the Nintendo DSi XL, packaging the Midnight Blue and Metallic Rose versions of the handheld with Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem for $169.99 each.

Wii
INCLUDES

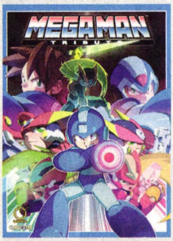
GAME INCLUDED!
NINTENDO DSi XL
INCLUDES 3 Pre-Installed Titles

BEYOND THE GAMES

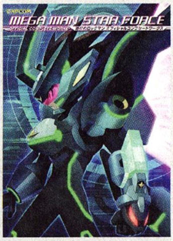
One of the great things about games is that they don't end at the cartridge or disc alone—they carry over into all sorts of exciting forms, from toys and animation to the pages of manga adventures. We've rounded up some of our favorite gaming tie-ins for you.

ART BOOKS

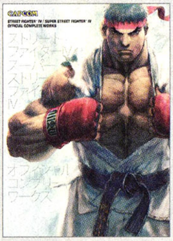
Take a look at the creation of your favorite game characters, or see new artists' takes on them, in these excellent art-filled books.



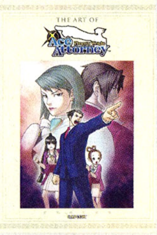
Mega Man Tribute
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $39.99



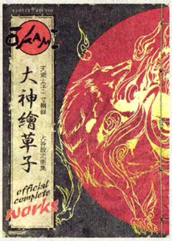
Mega Man Star Force Official Complete Works
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $39.99



Street Fighter IV / Super Street Fighter IV Official Complete Works
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $39.99



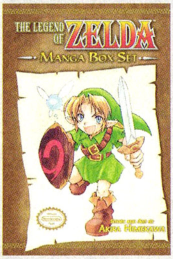
The Art of Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $39.99



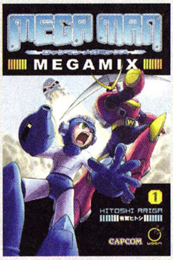
Okami Official Complete Works
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $39.99

MANGA

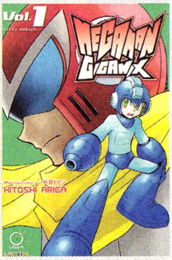
The stories of some of gaming's greatest heroes extend well beyond the games in these serialized manga adventures.



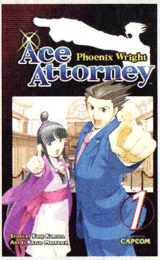
The Legend of Zelda Manga Box Set (10 Volumes)
VIZ Media
MSRP: $69.99



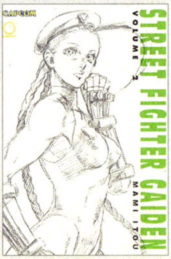
Mega Man Megamix
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $12.95 per volume



Mega Man Gigamix
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $12.95 per volume



Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
Kodansha Comics
MSRP: $10.99 per volume



Street Fighter Gaiden
UDON Entertainment
MSRP: $12.95 per volume

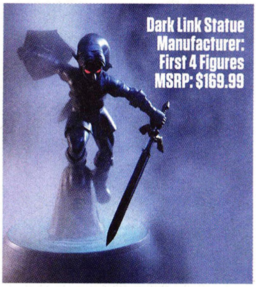
TOYS AND MORE

From action figures to high-end statues, game characters take shape as impeccable collectibles.

Sonic the Hedgehog 25th Anniversary 3" Figures
Manufacturer: Jazwares
MSRP: $9.99 each

Wolf Link and Midna Statue
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $329.99

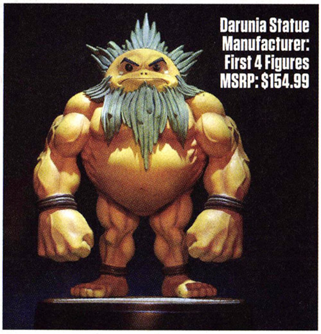
Metal Sonic Statue
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $154.99



Dark Link Statue
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $169.99

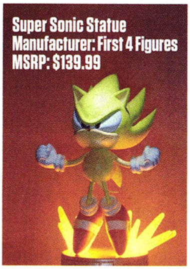
Sonic the Hedgehog 25th Anniversary Plushes
Manufacturer: Jazwares
MSRP: $7.99 to $24.99

Sonic the Hedgehog 25th Anniversary "Sonic Through Time" 5" Super Sonic Two-Pack
Manufacturer: Jazwares
MSRP: $19.99



Darunia Statue
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $154.99

Mario Nintendo DS Holder
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $29.99

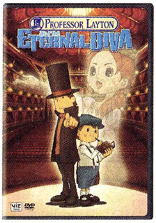


Super Sonic Statue
Manufacturer: First 4 Figures
MSRP: $139.99

Street Fighter Action Figure Two-Packs
Manufacturer: Jazwares
MSRP: $14.99 each

DVD

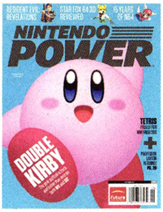
Professor Layton returns to the screen in an all-new way.



Professor Layton and the Eternal Diva
VIZ Media
MSRP: $19.97

NINTENDO POWER SUBSCRIPTION

There's always one gift you can't go wrong with, whether you're giving it to a fellow gamer or to yourself: a subscription to Nintendo Power. It's got the moves that you can use, and at only $19.95 for 12 great issues, it's pretty much the best purchase in the history of ever. Give it to your loved ones and be adored for all time, or fail to do so and endure a life of misery. The choice is yours!



Pokemon Poster Inside!
Nintendo Power
The Best Is Back!

From Alisa to Zafina, here's everything you need to know about Tekken 3D Prime Edition for Nintendo 3DS.

THE A TO Z OF TEKKEN 3D

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

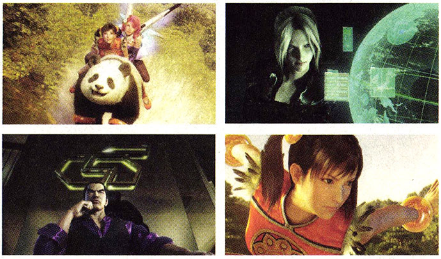
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI** DEVELOPER: **ARIKA** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012** **N3DS**

UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN LIVING UNDER A ROCK somewhere, you're probably aware that Tekken has been one of the leading names in 3D fighting games for the last 15 years or so. You're probably also aware that Tekken 3D Prime Edition is slated to hit the Nintendo 3DS handheld in February 2012. Considering that this is the first Tekken game to grace a Nintendo system in about a decade, however, you'll be forgiven if you don't know the difference between King and Armor King or you aren't sure why Jin occasionally sprouts wings from his back. That's where this article comes in. Keep reading to get up to speed on the ins and outs of the Tekken universe and fill your head with knowledge about Tekken 3D Prime Edition.

A

ALISA BOSCONOVICH

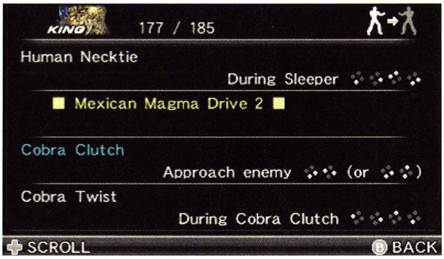
Alisa is one of more than 40 playable characters in Tekken 3D Prime Edition. She might look like an innocent girl, but she's actually a robot created by the brilliant (and somewhat eccentric) scientist Dr. Boskonovich. She can turn her arms into chainsaws, use her head as a time bomb (it replaces itself), and soar through the air via retractable thrusters on her back.



B

BLOOD VENGEANCE

In addition to the one-on-one fighting action of Tekken 3D Prime Edition, the game card contains Tekken: Blood Vengeance, a full-length CG movie presented in stereoscopic 3D. Set between Tekken 5 and 6, the movie features characters such as Nina Williams, Ling Xiaoyu, and Jin Kazama as they investigate a mysterious young man named Shin Kamiya. Naturally, there's plenty of mayhem-filled combat.



KING 177 / 185

Human Necktie

During Sleeper

Mexican Magma Drive 2

Cobra Clutch

Approach enemy (or)

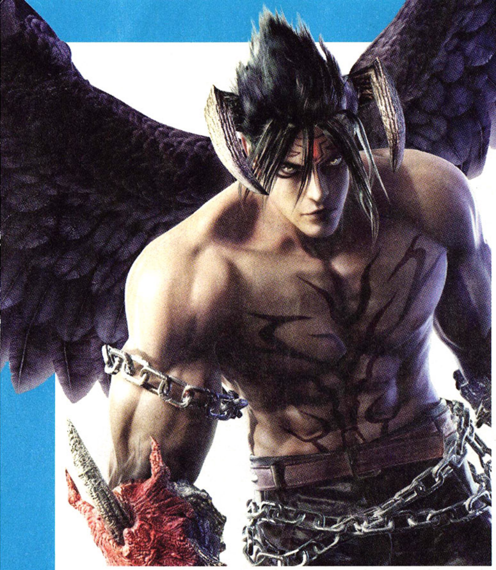
Cobra Twist

During Cobra Clutch

C

COMBOS

You can't have a fighting game without combos and special moves, and Tekken 3D has loads of them. Most characters have somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 combos to learn and master; fortunately, you can pause the action at any time to call up a moves list so you don't have to commit them all to memory.



D

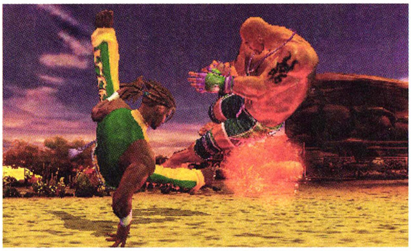
DEVIL JIN

Since Tekken 3, Jin Kazama has been one of the main characters in Tekken lore. Jin was originally a heroic character; however, he possesses a power known as the Devil Gene, which has driven him down a path of madness. When the Devil Gene activates, Jin grows claws, horns, and wings, and can shoot lasers from his eyes. Devil Jin is the final boss of Tekken 3D.

E

EDDY GORDO

Wrongly imprisoned for killing his own father, Eddy Gordo spent eight years in jail learning capoeira from a fellow inmate. Upon being released, Eddy dedicated his life to finding and defeating his father's true killers; he also trained fellow Tekken warrior Christie Monteiro. Eddy is an unpredictable fighter who utilizes powerful kicks that make him a great choice for beginners.



F

FENG WEI

Feng is a powerful and vicious kenpo practitioner. He has killed and injured countless people in his quest to become a martial-arts master. His destructive ways have caught the attention of fighters who intend to bring him to justice.

G

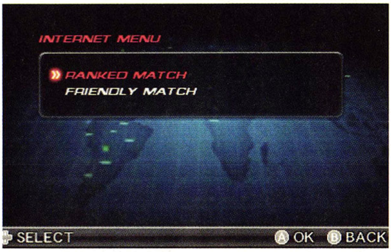
G CORPORATION

The G Corporation is a major global company and a rival of the Mishima Zaibatsu (see M—Mishima). The company is involved with all manner of dealings, both shady and legitimate. It somehow managed to use its science to revive Kazuya Mishima after he was thrown into a volcano; Kazuya has since become the company's chief executive.

H

HWOARANG

Once a member of a Korean street gang, Hwoarang is a tae kwon do expert who has an intense rivalry with Jin Kazama. Though the two have clashed several times, there has yet to be a decisive victor. Hwoarang was trained by Baek Doo San, another playable character.



INTERNET MENU

» RANKED MATCH
FRIENDLY MATCH

I

INTERNET PLAY

Like most other N3DS fighting games, Tekken 3D allows you to compete against other players from around the world. You can take part in ranked matches against random opponents, or you can battle against friends. You can also choose how many rounds to fight and the duration of each match.

J

JULIA CHANG

Julia Chang was raised in the Native American tribal lands of Arizona. She entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament initially to find her adoptive mother, Michelle, and later to prevent her homeland from succumbing to desertification.

KING

King isn't actually a dude with an animal head; he's a lucha libre wrestler who wears a lifelike jaguar mask. The first King was killed during Tekken 3, but a new hero took up his mantle. To complicate matters, there was a similar masked character named Armor King who taught the current King everything he knows. After the original Armor King's death, his brother became the second Armor King.

K

L

LILI ROCHEFORT

Lili, one of the more recent additions to the Tekken universe, has a bit of a problem: she loves fighting, but her father forbids it. What's a rich girl to do? Sneak out and beat the crap out of people in fighting tournaments—that's what.

M

MISHIMA

The Mishima family plays a central role in the Tekken saga. Heihachi Mishima was the original founder of the King of Iron Fist Tournament, and he fought (and attempted to kill) his son Kazuya for control of the Mishima Zaibatsu, a powerful international conglomerate. The company is currently run by Kazuya's son, Jin Kazama. Although Heihachi should be in his 70s, in Tekken 3D he appears to have somehow regained his youth.

N

NINA WILLIAMS

An assassin for hire, Nina Williams has been a Tekken mainstay since the series debuted. Although she's definitely of questionable moral fiber, she isn't nearly as questionable as her manipulative sister, Anna, with whom she shares an intense rivalry. At various times, Nina has attempted to assassinate Heihachi Mishima, Kazuya Mishima, Jin Kazama, and her own son, Steve Fox.

O

ORIGINAL STAGES

Tekken 3D doesn't contain any all-new characters, but it does feature eight original stages—some ancient ruins, a bowling-alley rooftop, a cathedral, a desert wasteland, the Lotus Hall, the Temple of the Dragon, a wrecked dojo, and the Mishima Zaibatsu Headquarters—that were made specifically for this game. The stages look great, especially in 3D.

PAUL PHOENIX

Paul Phoenix—easily recognized by his distinctive hair and red gi—is one of only a few Tekken characters to have appeared in every installment of the series. Strangely enough, one of Paul's greatest rivals is a bear named Kuma.

P

Q

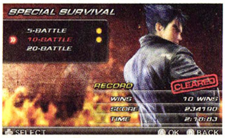
QUICK BATTLE

Quick Battle is the name of the standard versus-CPU arcade battle mode in Tekken 3D. After selecting your character, you'll have to defeat 10 increasingly difficult opponents before you see the credits roll.

R

ROGER JR.

That's right: there's actually a playable kangaroo—in fact, you're technically playing as two kangaroos. Roger Jr. is the little guy in the pouch; the big marsupial is his mother. Presumably, they learned their fighting abilities from the original Roger, who was genetically engineered by the Mishima Zaibatsu to be a skilled fighter.



SPECIAL SURVIVAL

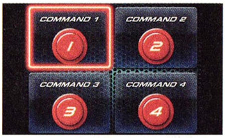
5-BATTLE
10-BATTLE
20-BATTLE

RECORD
WINS 10 WINS
SCORE 234190
TIME 2:18:83

S

SPECIAL SURVIVAL

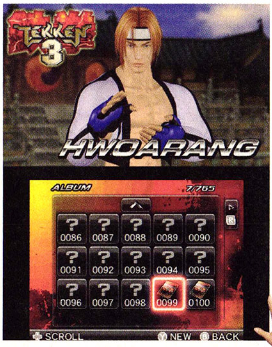
Special Survival is another versus-CPU mode in Tekken 3D. Using the character of your choice, your goal is to defeat 5, 10, or 20 opponents in succession with minimal health restoration between bouts. To say it's challenging is an understatement!



T

TOUCH SCREEN

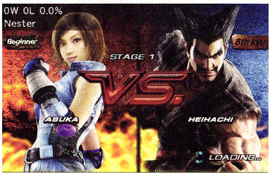
When in battle, the touch screen features four large buttons, each of which corresponds to a preassigned throw or special move. The moves are very convenient to have on hand, but if you don't want them there you can turn the buttons off or remap them with standard punches or kicks (or button-press combinations).



U

UNLOCKABLES

What this game lacks in variety of unlockables it makes up for with sheer quantity. There are a whopping 765 collectible cards to unlock, each featuring characters, scenes, or artwork from various Tekken games. You can trade cards with other players via StreetPass.



V

VERSUS BATTLE

Beating up CPU foes is fun, but there's nothing like the challenge of taking on a human opponent in a Versus Battle. Of course, Tekken 3D allows you to face off against other players over a local wireless connection, as well as over the Internet (see I—Internet Play).

W

WANG JINREI

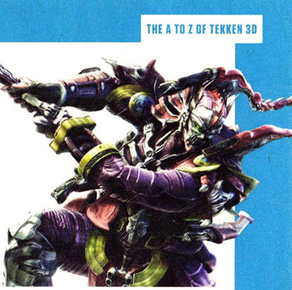
Though he's getting up there in years, Wang is a fighter to be reckoned with. He has close ties to the Mishima family, and he trained his granddaughter Ling Xiaoyu in the ways of the warrior. When he's not fighting, he can often be found gardening or immersing himself in nature.

X

XIAOYU

Young, cheerful, and possessing an unbridled love of amusement parks, Ling Xiaoyu has become a fan-favorite character since her debut in Tekken 3. Her speed and grace make her a tough opponent in battle, and she's steadfastly loyal to her friends. She's one of the main characters in Tekken: Blood Vengeance.

Y



YOSHIMITSU

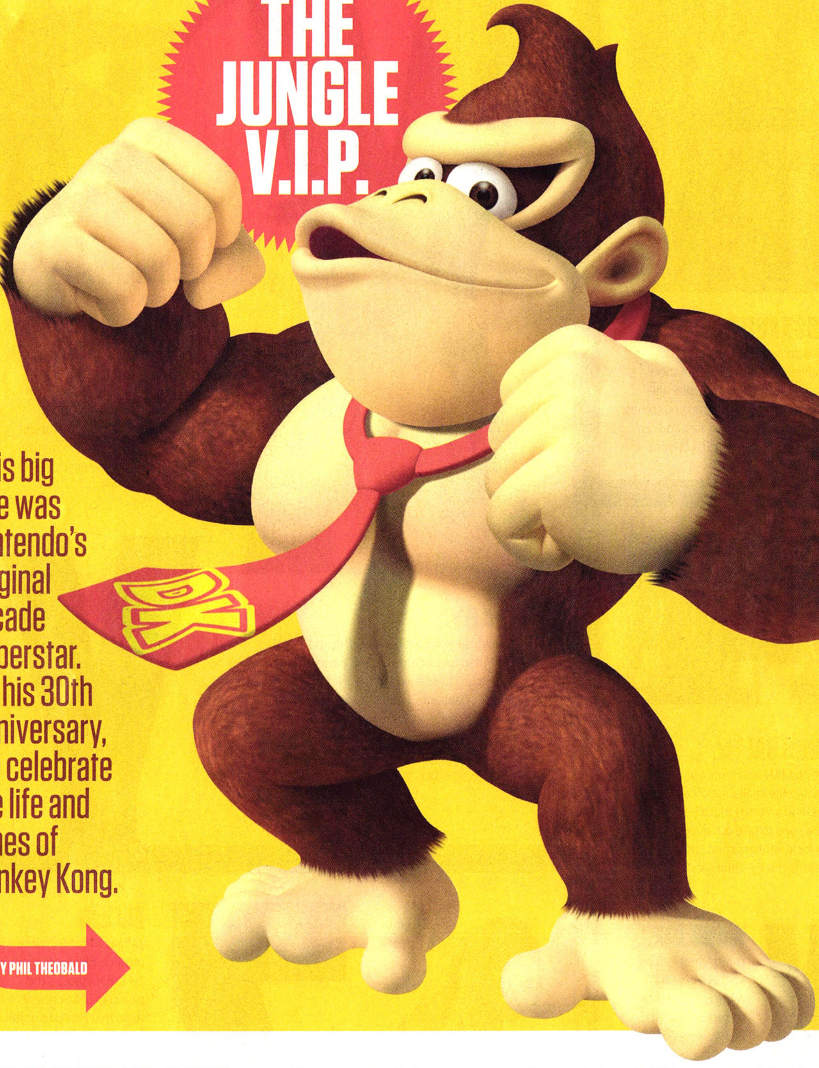
Clad in ornate armor, Yoshimitsu is a ninja from the Manji clan. He's entered the King of Iron Fist Tournament for numerous reasons over the years, sometimes for noble purposes, other times for revenge. Though he wields a sword, he uses it only for special moves. Fans may also recognize him from his appearances in the Soulcalibur series.

Z

ZAFINA

Zafina, one of the most recent additions to the Tekken mythos, is the guardian of an ancient tomb that is said to protect her village. She became involved in the King of Iron Fist Tournament after hearing rumors that the world was on the brink of destruction. She fights using unusual movements and often stands on one leg like a flamingo.

THE JUNGLE V.I.P.

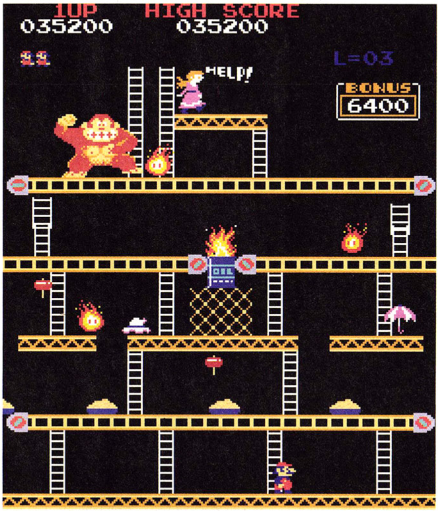


This big ape was Nintendo's original arcade superstar. On his 30th anniversary, we celebrate the life and times of Donkey Kong.

BY PHIL THEOBALD

YOU NEED TO HAVE a pretty powerful presence to get top billing over Mario, but in 1981, Donkey Kong was able to pull it off. Both characters debuted in Nintendo's arcade classic Donkey Kong, and it was the mischievous, barrel-tossing ape that stole the show. Three decades later, Donkey Kong is still going strong. He's even branched out from his original position as a girlfriend-kidnapping ne'er-do-well into more heroic roles (although he's not afraid to cause a little trouble on occasion). To celebrate DK's 30th anniversary, we're taking a look back at our simian friend's many adventures.

THE CLASSIC SERIES



DONKEY KONG

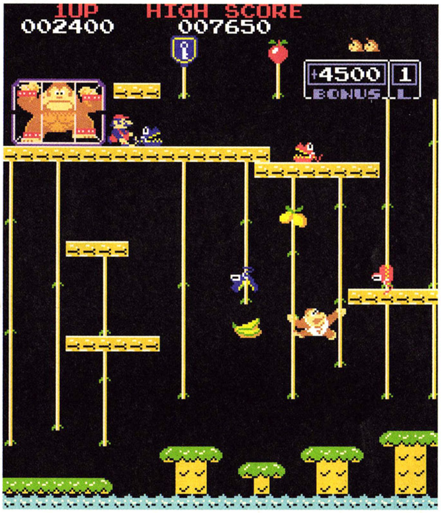
PLATFORM: **ARCADE** | **RELEASE DATE:** **1981**

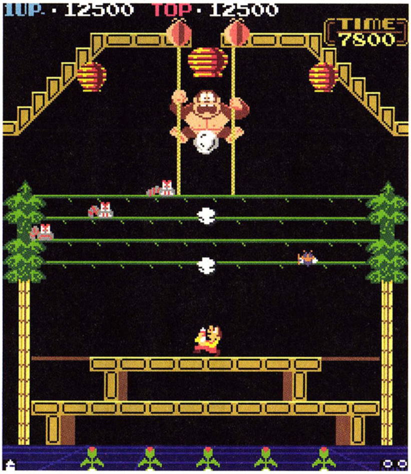
In his first appearance, Donkey Kong kidnaps Pauline, the girlfriend of the game's protagonist, Mario (then known only as Jumpman). DK escapes with Pauline to a four-level construction site, forcing Mario to climb to the rescue of the damsel in distress. Ultimately, DK plummets to the ground after Mario successfully collapses the metal structure upon which the ape stands.

DONKEY KONG JR.

PLATFORM: **ARCADE** | **RELEASE DATE:** **1982**

Previously the villain, Donkey Kong is now the victim as Mario seeks revenge for the kidnapping of his girlfriend. Chained and locked in a cage, the big ape can do nothing but wait for his son Donkey Kong Jr. to get past the many obstacles that Mario has set up. Once he is set free, Donkey Kong gets back at Mario by kicking the plumber across the screen.



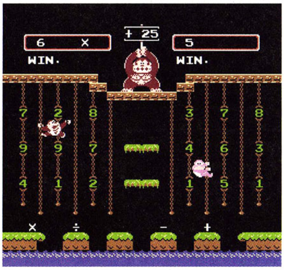


DONKEY KONG 3

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**

RELEASE DATE: **1983**

Donkey Kong is back to stir up trouble, but this time it's not Mario who has to contend with him. DK's new stomping ground is a greenhouse where he has disturbed the nests of a swarm of insects. These irritated bugs threaten to steal the crops of the greenhouse's owner, Stanley the Bugman. DK ends up getting blasted with Stanley's noxious insect repellant.

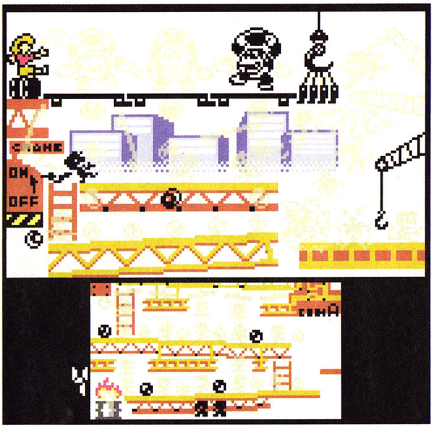


DONKEY KONG JR. MATH

PLATFORM: **NES** | **RELEASE DATE:** **1985**

Donkey Kong is clearly a demanding father. Even after his son saved him from Mario's clutches, DK immediately puts the tiny ape to work on a series of math problems. The player controls DK Jr. while dad brandishes a sign that displays the solution to the mathematical formula that Junior must construct.

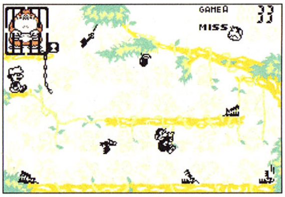
GAME & WATCH TITLES



DONKEY KONG

RELEASE DATE: 1982

This dual-screened game is inspired by the original Donkey Kong arcade title. As Mario, the player scales a construction site to save Pauline while Donkey Kong lobs barrels to thwart the effort. You can play both the original game and a graphically updated version of it in Game & Watch Gallery 2 (Game Boy Color, 1998) and Game & Watch Gallery 4 (Game Boy Advance, 2002).



DONKEY KONG JR.

RELEASE DATE: 1982

Taking cues from the arcade title of the same name, this single-screen game has Junior climbing vines and snagging keys to free DK from Mario's clutches. The game is currently playable in Game & Watch Gallery 3 (GBC, 1999) and Game & Watch Gallery 4 (GBA, 2002). In 2010, it was also released on DSiWare.

DONKEY KONG II

RELEASE DATE: 1983

Donkey Kong II may sound like a new game, but it's based on the final level of Donkey Kong Jr. in which the young ape must scale a series of chains to unlock the shackles that keep his father bound. This oft-forgotten title can also be found in Game & Watch Gallery 3 (GBC, 1999)

DONKEY KONG CIRCUS

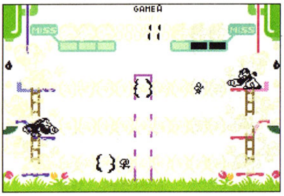
RELEASE DATE: 1984

A rarity among Game & Watch titles, Donkey Kong Circus was in full color. In this game, Donkey Kong has once again been captured by Mario and is being forced to perform in a circus. You control DK as he balances on a barrel while juggling pineapples and dodging fireballs.

DONKEY KONG HOCKEY

RELEASE DATE: 1984

Another in the Micro Vs. series, this sports game has Donkey Kong facing off against Mario on the ice. It was a rather simple game—players remained near their goal while attempting to shoot pucks past opponents.



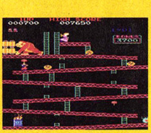
DONKEY KONG 3

RELEASE DATE: 1984

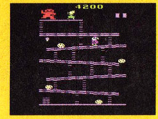
Donkey Kong gets another chance to face off against Stanley the Bugman in this Game & Watch title. The two stand on opposite sides of the screen and use bug spray to push insects toward each other. The original handheld title was part of the short-lived Micro Vs. series, which had two small controllers tethered to the LCD screen. Donkey Kong 3 appears in Game & Watch Gallery 4 (GBA, 2002).

Retro Ports

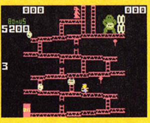
In the early '80s, Nintendo had yet to release its own home console. Instead, the company's arcade titles were licensed to various publishers and then ported to the systems of the time. The graphics back then—as you can see—didn't always live up to the arcade originals. Of course, when Nintendo finally released the NES, players were able to get more-accurate versions of their favorite coin-op games. Let's see how Donkey Kong's debut survived the transition from the arcade to the home.



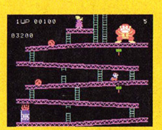
Arcade (1981)



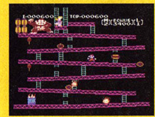
Atari 2600 (1982)



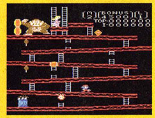
Intellivison (1982)



Colecovision (1982)

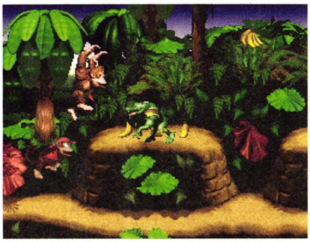


NES (1986)



Atari 7800 (1988)

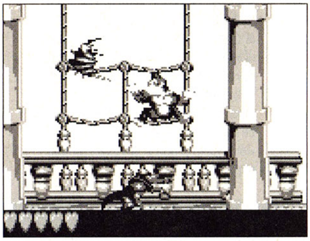
THE DONKEY KONG COUNTRY SERIES



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
RELEASE DATE: 1994

1994 was a big year for Donkey Kong. The ape had been out of commission for nearly 10 years, but Donkey Kong Country brought him back in a big way. No longer simply a brutish bad guy for Mario to thwart, in Donkey Kong Country, DK battles the reptilian King K. Rool and his army of Kremlings.



DONKEY KONG LAND

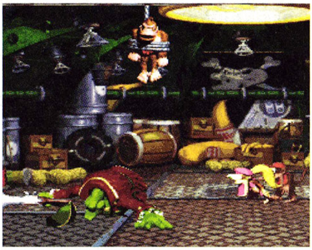
PLATFORM: GAME BOY
RELEASE DATE: 1995

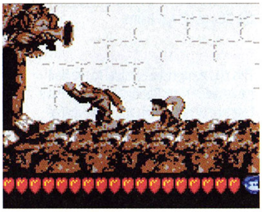
Donkey Kong Land serves as a portable counterpart to Donkey Kong Country. This time around, the elderly Cranky Kong claims that Donkey Kong Country was a success only because of its excellent graphics. He challenges DK to once again defeat K. Rool, this time on an 8-bit system.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2: DIDDY'S KONG QUEST

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
RELEASE DATE: 1995

How embarrassing! After proving himself a hero in his two previous games, Donkey Kong ends up getting kidnapped in this sequel. Since he spends the entire game being held captive by K. Rool, it's up to DK's nephew Diddy Kong and newcomer Dixie Kong to save the day.

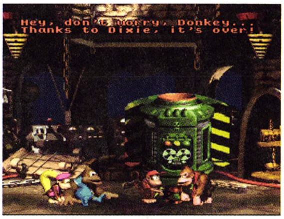




DONKEY KONG LAND 2

PLATFORM: GAME BOY | **RELEASE DATE:** 1996

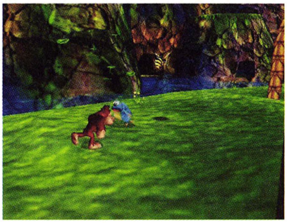
This portable sequel shares a plot with its 16-bit predecessor, Donkey Kong Country 2. The villainous K. Rool is once again holding poor Donkey Kong captive, so the player can control only Diddy and Dixie Kong. Interestingly enough, this game's 1997 sequel, Donkey Kong Land III, doesn't involve Donkey Kong at all!



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 3: DIXIE KONG'S DOUBLE TROUBLE!

PLATFORM: SUPER NES | **RELEASE DATE:** 1996

Yeesh! Once again, Donkey Kong is forced to take a back seat in his own game. This time around, both he and Diddy Kong end up getting apenapped by the Kremlings—this adventure's heroes are Dixie Kong and her young cousin Kiddy Kong. DK doesn't make an appearance until the game's ending.



DONKEY KONG 64

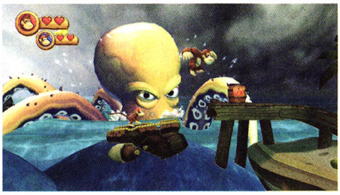
PLATFORM: SUPER NES | **RELEASE DATE:** 1999

After four games, Donkey Kong finally returns to his own series as a playable character. K. Rool has his sights set on Donkey's Kong's home, the egotistically named Donkey Kong Isle. In order to stop K. Rool and his Blast-O-Matic weapon, DK must liberate his ape friends from the Kremlings before taking on the evil King.

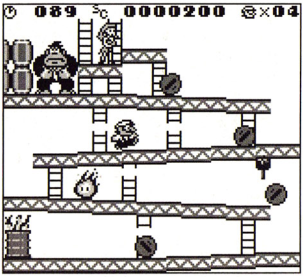
DONKEY KONG COUNTRY RETURNS

PLATFORM: Wii | **RELEASE DATE:** 2010

Donkey Kong 64 featured a full 3D world, but Donkey Kong County Returns brings Donkey Kong back into a traditional platforming environment. Gone are all the extra playable characters—this game sticks to Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong. The threat this time isn't the Kremlings, either. Instead, DK confronts the Tiki Tak Tribe, a band of living tiki masks that have hypnotized the many animals on Donkey Kong Island.



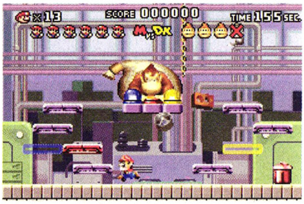
THE VS. SERIES

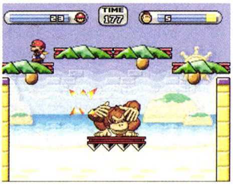


DONKEY KONG

PLATFORM: **GAME BOY** | **RELEASE DATE:** **1994**

Debuting a few months before Donkey Kong Country, this portable title marked the true return of DK after a decade-long hiatus. As the title suggest suggests, this is a remake of the original Donkey Kong game—well, it is at first. After the arcade version's four stages, in the Game Boy version DK recaptures Pauline and runs off. Mario must trek through nearly 100 extra puzzle-filled levels to defeat Donkey Kong. This excellent game was recently released in the Nintendo eShop.





MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG

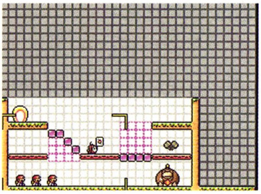
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY ADVANCE** | **RELEASE DATE:** **2004**

This pseudosequel to the Game Boy version of Donkey Kong takes DK's rivalry with Mario to the next level. In a fit of jealousy, Donkey Kong breaks into Mario's toy factory and makes away with a sack of Mini Mario toys. To reclaim the tiny doppelgangers, Mario once again has to clear a mess of tricky stages. In the end, Donkey Kong battles Mario while piloting a giant robot.

MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** | **RELEASE DATE:** **2006**

During the opening of a Mini Mario–themed amusement park, Pauline chooses to play with a Mini Mario figure instead of the new Mini Donkey Kong toys. This upsets DK so much that he kidnaps Pauline once again. This game marks a transition in the Vs. series from Mario-style platforming with puzzle elements to more puzzle-centric gameplay reminiscent of the classic Lemmings.



MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG: MINIS MARCH AGAIN!

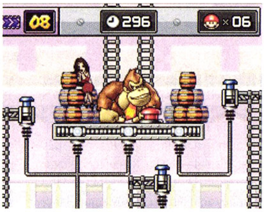
PLATFORM: **DSiWARE** | **RELEASE DATE:** **2009**

Once again, Donkey Kong's infatuation with Pauline leads to trouble. After being denied entry into the Super Mini Mario World theme park, DK breaks in and runs off with Pauline. This downloadable game plays much like its predecessor.

MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG: MINI-LAND MAYHEM!

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** | **RELEASE DATE:** **2010**

Mario needs to learn to avoid amusement parks when Donkey Kong is around. The ape desperately wants one of the rare Mini Pauline toys that are being distributed at Mario's latest theme park. When the supply of toys runs out, DK makes off with the real Pauline, holding her captive atop the park's Ferris wheel.

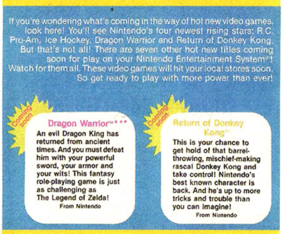


The Lost DK Games

Although Donkey Kong has starred in many games during his 30 years of existence, there are a few titles that never materialized. Here, we remember some of the Donkey Kong games that might have been.

Return of Donkey Kong (NES)

In 1987, the Official Nintendo Player's Guide was required reading. It featured scores of maps and secret tips for many of the most popular NES games of the era. Additionally, it included previews of a few upcoming games including the never-to-be-released Return of Donkey Kong. Little is known about this title other than the fact that players would be able to control DK. Ultimately, fans would have to wait seven years for that opportunity.



If you're wondering what's coming in the way of hot new video games, look here! You'll see Nintendo's four newest rising stars: R.C. Pro-Am, Ice Hockey, Dragon Warrior and Return of Donkey Kong. But that's not all! There are seven other hot new titles coming soon for play on your Nintendo Entertainment System®! Watch for them all. These video games will hit your local stores soon. So get ready to play with more power than ever!

Coming soon

Dragon Warrior™***

An evil Dragon King has returned from ancient times. And you must defeat him with your powerful sword, your armor and your wits! This fantasy role-playing game is just as challenging as The Legend of Zelda!

From Nintendo

Coming soon

Return of Donkey Kong™

This is your chance to get hold of that barrel-throwing, mischief-making rascal Donkey Kong and take control! Nintendo's best known character is back. And he's up to more tricks and trouble than you can imagine!

From Nintendo

Donkey Kong Coconut Crackers (GBA)

Donkey Kong was originally slated to star in this tile-arranging puzzle game, but it simply wasn't meant to be. The game would eventually be released in 2005 for the GBA as It's Mr. Pants.

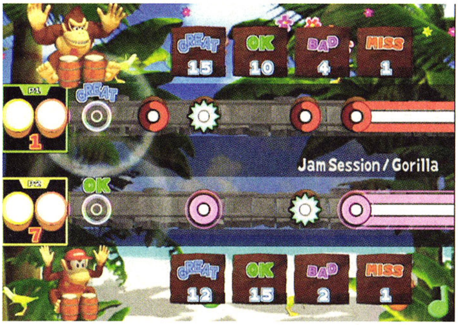
Donkey Kong Racing (GameCube)

This was going to be a sequel to the N64 game Diddy Kong Racing, and would have featured Donkey Kong and other characters from the Donkey Kong Country series riding animals around various race tracks.

Donkey Kong Plus (GameCube)

Quietly shown at E3 2002, Donkey Kong Plus was a follow-up to the 1994 Game Boy version of Donkey Kong. The big innovation in this title is that it was to allow players to create their own stages. These custom levels could then be transferred to the Game Boy Advance via a link cable for some portable action.

DONKEY KONG'S FURTHER ADVENTURES



DONKEY KONGA

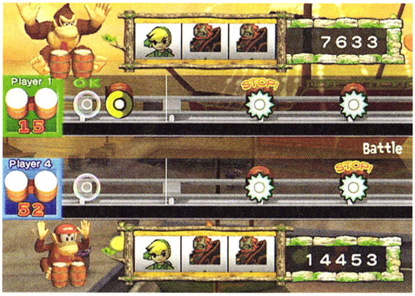
PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE | RELEASE DATE: 2004

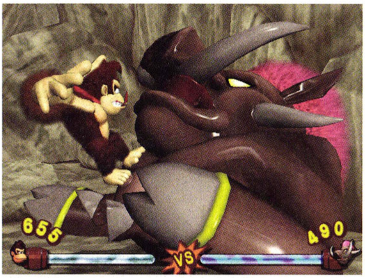
In this rhythm game, Donkey Kong stumbles across a pair of magic bongo drums and decides that he's going to become a master musician to obtain riches and fame (which, of course, will earn him all the bananas he can eat). This game came with a set of DK Bongo controllers for players to pound.

DONKEY KONGA 2

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE | RELEASE DATE: 2005

Still looking to improve his drumming skills, Donkey Kong decides to take his musical act on tour. This rhythm game plays much like its predecessor, but with a new selection of songs from which to choose. Nintendo subsequently released Donkey Konga 3, but it was available only in Japan.



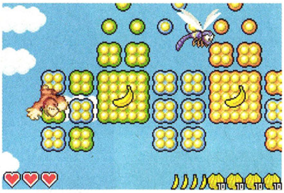


DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE

RELEASE DATE: 2005

Donkey Kong travels to several different kingdoms, taking down the many brutish bad guys that are terrorizing the lands (including a gang of evil Kongs). Ultimately, DK faces off against the Ghastly King. In a fun twist, this platformer can be played with the DK Bongo controller. In 2009, an enhanced port of the game was released for Wii under the New Play Control banner.



DK: KING OF SWING

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE | RELEASE DATE: 2005

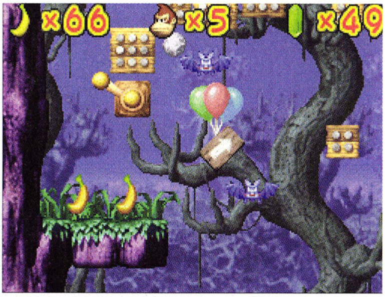
Donkey Kong must once again take on King K. Rool when the Kremling leader invades DK's Jungle Jam Tournament and swipes all of the prize medals. Instead of being a Donkey Kong Country-style platformer, though, this game requires DK to traverse each stage by swinging on pegs scattered liberally throughout the world.

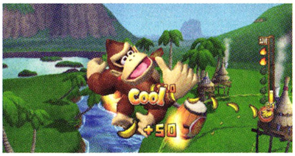
DK: JUNGLE CLIMBER

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS

RELEASE DATE: 2007

While on vacation on Sun Sun Island in this sequel to DK: King of Swing, Donkey Kong discovers a giant banana. However, the massive fruit turns out to be a spaceship belonging to Xananab, a visitor from another world who, well, looks like a banana. Xananab explains that K. Rool has stolen his Crystal Bananas in a bid to take over the universe. Always the team player, DK steps up to save the day.





DONKEY KONG: BARREL BLAST

PLATFORM: Wii | RELEASE DATE: 2007

In this racing game, Donkey Kong takes to the skies with a pair of rocket-powered barrels. Players control the two engines independently by shaking the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers.

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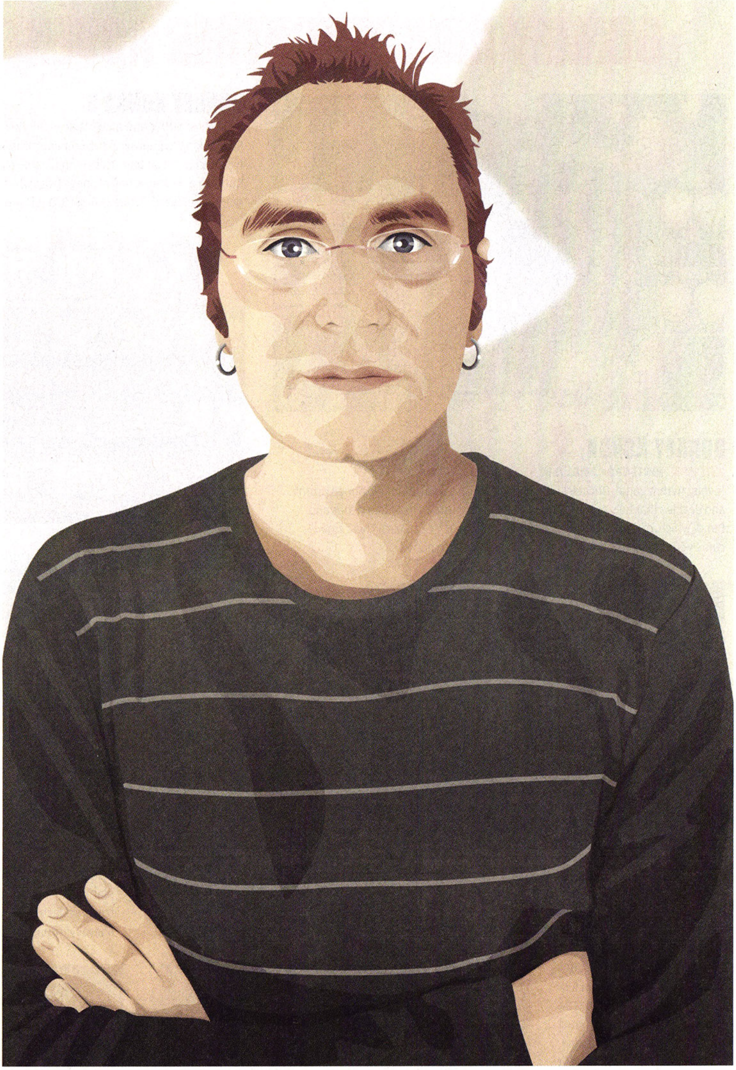
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
March 13, 1974

BIRTHPLACE
Ohio

POSITION
CEO/Director, Gaijin Games

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating the Bit.Trip series; going by the moniker of CommanderVideo

FAVORITE FOOD
Macaroni and cheese

CURRENT PROJECTS
Bit.Trip Presents: Runner2, Future Legend of Rhythm Alien

Alex Neuse

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

As a game designer at LucasArts, Alex Neuse already had a comfortable job in the video game industry. But comfort isn't everything, and Neuse found that he preferred the creative freedom he could attain by going independent. It was a risky proposition, but one that paid off when Neuse's fledgling company, Gaijin Games, released the six-part Bit.Trip series. The games—which combine retro-inspired game design, modern techno music, and weighty themes—have gone on to become some of the most recognizable titles on WiiWare, and you don't have to play them for long to realize that Neuse is a developer who marches to the beat of his own drum. Read on to find out what makes this creative individual tick.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you first become interested in video games? What games did you enjoy when you were growing up?**

ALEX NEUSE My first interest in games was born in the local arcade growing up. Arcades were very different in the late '70s and early '80s. They were realms of mystery—of magic. They were the kinds of places you would never find today, because they just didn't feel safe, although I think they probably were. The games that caught my attention were primarily space-based: Space Invaders, Asteroids, and Galaxian, of course, but also Berzerk, Tempest, and Pac-Man.

How did you break into the games business?

My big opportunity came in the form of a favor from a friend who worked at Lucasfilm. She informed me that they were looking for video game testers at LucasArts, and knowing my passion for film, *Star Wars* (at that time), and games, she thought I might be interested in applying. The interview was a slam dunk, and I was moving across the country within two weeks of hearing about the position.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a movie director. I wanted to tell fantastic stories about aliens, horrifying stories about ghosts, fantastic stories about alternate worlds...I guess I really wanted to be a storyteller.

What important lessons did you learn while at LucasArts, and what prompted you to leave and go independent?

LucasArts was an incredible place to learn how to make games. I think that everyone in this industry should work in QA at some point. Starting there gave me a perspective on game development that is absolutely priceless. From my desk in the QA pit, I got to see all aspects of development and got to consider where I'd like my career path to go. I eventually transitioned into design while at LucasArts, and after working on Gladius, decided I wanted more creative freedom and left to start Gaijin Games.

What are the benefits and drawbacks of running and working at a small independent studio?

The biggest benefit is complete creative freedom. No one tells us what to do or when to do it by. We are finally in charge of our own destiny. This is not without its drawbacks, of course. Since we are completely independent, we could really screw things up for ourselves if we act like idiots. Which we often do. But it's a fine line. Being independent means you're more vulnerable. But you're also more agile. Kind of like a ninja, really—no armor, but mad skills.

What was the impetus for creating the Bit.Trip games?

I've always been fascinated by the emotional impact of games, and am especially interested in the impact of classic games. When I was a kid, I loved the games I played so much that I would make up incredible backstories that were never present within the actual product. And as I grew older, the idea that simple games could have such impact on one's creativity and imagination really inspired me. With the Bit.Trip series, I wanted to create a series that could work on multiple levels. I wanted the games to be fun to play regardless of the story. But I wanted the story to be there as well, for those of us who like to find meaning in works of art. Basically, it's an exercise in simplistic storytelling.

What are your thoughts on game difficulty?

This is something that I have kind of mixed feelings about. Back when we started making the Bit.Trip series, I was fully in love with very difficult games. But as we continued to work on the series, I started to chill out on that whole vibe. But we had created a name for our series that was synonymous with "difficult," so in the final three games, we tried to find a better difficulty balance. I think we did our best with Bit.Trip Runner, which is very challenging, but each section is incredibly short, and there are no game overs. So the successes are more frequent, and there are really no failures. I'd like to continue moving in this direction with our future games.

It's well known that the Bit.Trip games have underlying themes and messages, but they're kept pretty vague. Why is that, and how important was that to you? Are you at all concerned that players missed or misinterpreted the message?

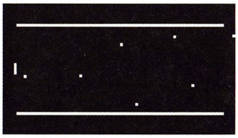
This gets back to the notion of interpretation. The story was kept vague because different people experience feelings and thoughts uniquely from one another. For some, the gameplay will totally speak to them. For others, it'll be the music that does it. Or the background imagery or cut-scenes. We wanted each aspect of the series to be vague enough that people wouldn't feel like there was one overpowering aspect to the games. We wanted everything to work in symphony. And judging from our fan emails and numerous deconstruction articles written about the series, we're not concerned at all that people are missing anything. And if they are,

GAMEOGRAPHY

Though this list is dominated by the Bit.Trip series (and we didn't even have space to list the N3DS and Wii compilations), Neuse was involved with a number of popular games, including Grim Fandango, during his time as a tester at LucasArts.

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: MYSTERIES OF THE SITH
1998, PC
TESTER

GLADIUS
2003, GAMECUBE
DESIGNER



BIT.TRIP BEAT
2009, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR

BIT.TRIP CORE
2009, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR

that's fine. There's more to the series than the story. We wouldn't have it any other way.

I understand the final game in the Bit.Trip series was supposed to be something completely different. What was the game originally intended to be, and why did it change?
Actually, both Fate and Flux were completely different when we started out. Fate was code-named Party, and it was going to be a house-party rhythm game where you had to let all the party people in but avoid letting the uninvited spiders into the house. And the environment was going to grow and get more and more crazy as you did well—like in Samba de Amigo.

Flux was code-named Gravity and was going to be kind of like a cross between Beat and Core. You were going to have to protect CommanderVideo's spiritual essence in the center of the screen from the distractions of his past life. But we knew that we had to kill CommanderVideo to have Gravity, and that's where Fate came from. Then, once we realized that Beat was CommanderVideo's prebirth, it felt appropriate to bookend the series with similar gameplay for his postdeath adventure.

Do you have a favorite game in the Bit.Trip series?
I think that Flux is my favorite game in the series, and it's primarily because of the unorthodox ending.

Do you want to continue on indie titles or would you like to work on something bigger?
We will always remain independent. But independence doesn't necessarily mean smaller titles. I mean, look at companies like Insomniac, Valve, or Double Fine. They're independent, but they make very big games. Gaijin Games will always focus on making interesting games, and we'll let the game tell us how big/small it should be.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
When I started, it was completely possible for someone to play every single good game released in a year. Now, that is totally impossible. As it becomes easier to make and release games, there's just so much out there to experience. Ultimately, I think this is awesome. It shows that the industry is maturing as an expressive medium. So, the industry has grown and games have become totally ubiquitous. With this game saturation has come the microtransaction, the price "race to the bottom," and service-based entertainment. Some of this is good and some of this is bad, but it's all progress. It's harder to make a product today and release it as it is, without some sort of expandability or added-value content planned.

> "...I am always interested in games that can affect me on an emotional level."

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
My favorite part is the very beginning of preproduction. This is when you can dream big. Good preproduction meetings are like sitting around and playing make-believe. At the beginning, almost anything is possible.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
I have finally learned, after all these years, to interrupt this feeling of being stumped by talking to other members of the team. There is no reason to pound your head against a wall alone. It's much more fun and helpful to do it with a colleague. I find that once you start talking through your problems out loud, with someone else to offer a new perspective, solutions come much more easily.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I really admire game-industry visionaries like Miyamoto, Mizuguchi, and Suda51. Although I don't always like their games, I think that they have done so much for this industry, both in the mainstream as well as the avant-garde. I have such a deep respect for people who follow their vision.

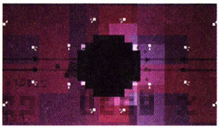
And as far as actual games go, I am always interested in games that can affect me on an emotional level. I want games to mature into an art form that can actually move people. Surely, there will always be a place for simple fun, but I also want more Silent Hill 2s or Shadows of the Colossus.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
My admiration always goes toward media that has lasting impact on my mood or on my life in general. The early works of Terry Gilliam, almost everything from Tom Waits, and the horrific and mesmerizing comics of Hideshi Hino spring to mind.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Playing video games. Doy.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I'd have the superpower of infinite wealth. But every superpower has to have a downside. So, while I would have infinite money, it would only manifest in a permanent $20 bill in my front-left pocket. If I took it out and bought something for $15 and put $5 back into my pocket, the next time I reached in, there would only be a $20 bill in there. So if I wanted to buy something expensive, I'd have to reach into my pocket over and over again and set the bills on the table, say. So, it'd be a pain in the butt, but I could do it. I'd buy houses this way. And islands. Oh, and planets.

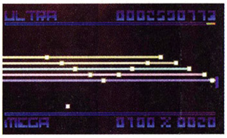
GAMEOGRAPHY



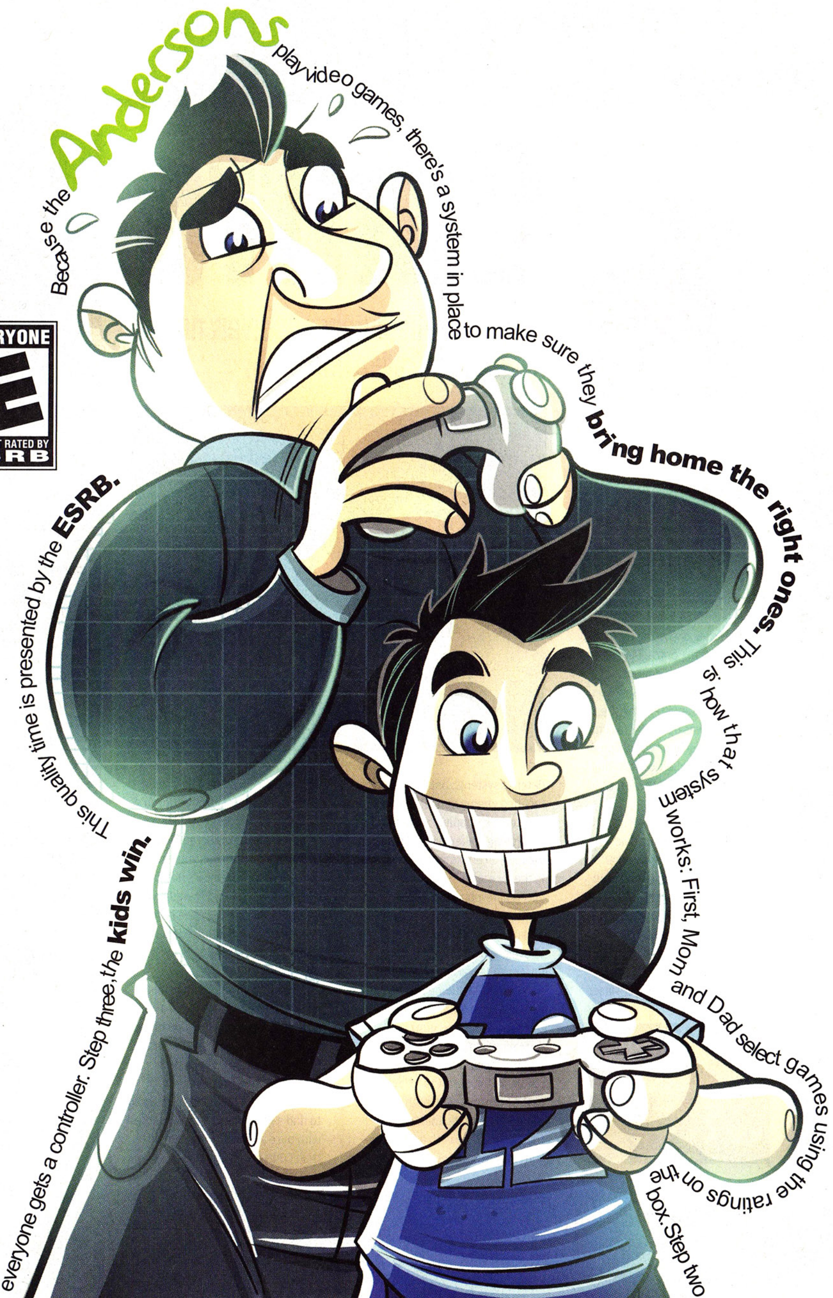
BIT.TRIP VOID
2009, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR

BIT.TRIP RUNNER
2010, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR

BIT.TRIP FATE
2010, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR



BIT.TRIP FLUX
2011, WiiWARE
DIRECTOR



Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

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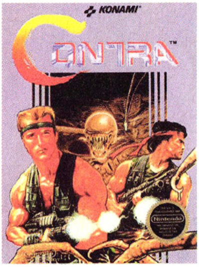
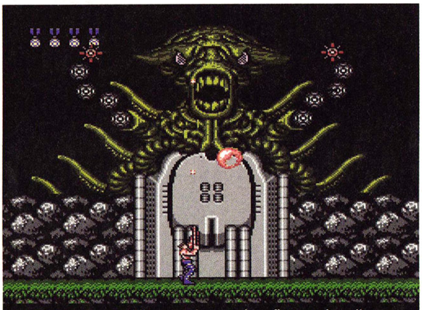
Next up: running for governor!



Contra

When you absolutely, positively need to kick some alien butt


Any war-hardened soldier can take on a giant, fire-spewing, alien-faced battle bunker, but only a real man can do it without a shirt.

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **FEBRUARY 1988**
FEATURED IN ISSUES: **1, 9, 22, 44, 128**
PREFERRED NUMBER OF LIVES: **30**

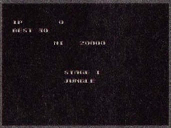
If you had an itchy trigger finger during the NES era, there was really only one game that could sooth that itch: Contra. Based on an arcade title, Contra epitomized the run-'n'-gun subgenre of shooters—armed with a never-ending supply of ammo, it was up to you to run, jump, and blast your way through eight stages of alien-obliterating action as you fought the forces of the Red Falcon.

Admittedly, Contra wasn't a very long game—you could plow through it in less than 20 minutes if you had the skills—but it was very challenging, and the programmers packed every inch of it with fantastic, intense gameplay. Whether you were leaping across an exploding bridge, zapping automated turrets, dodging laser defense systems, battling a heavily fortified enemy bunker, ascending a waterfall, hopping on mine carts, destroying spike-covered tanks, or blasting an enormous alien square in the face, there was no lack of adrenaline-pumping thrills. Konami even spiced things up with a couple of faux-3D forward-scrolling stages (in which you infiltrated enemy bases) and a variety of weapon power-ups—including a machine gun, a laser, a flame gun, and the fan-favorite spread gun.

Making the game even better was the inclusion of two-player co-op. As fun as it was to lay waste to the bad guys solo, nothing was more entertaining (or chaotic) than teaming up with a friend to run roughshod over the enemy legions. True, playing co-op could sometimes be a hindrance (if you've ever had an ally cost you a life by scrolling you off the screen while climbing the waterfall, you know what I mean), but there's nothing like having a war buddy watch your six while you face the alien hordes. Besides, if your pal caused you to run out of lives, you could always swipe one of his.

Contra's winning formula made it an instant hit, which led to a number of sequels—most recently, Contra ReBirth for WiiWare. Even more than 20 years after its release, however, the original stands out as a true classic. It's hard to find a game more densely packed with pure action and excitement than Contra. —**CHRIS H.**

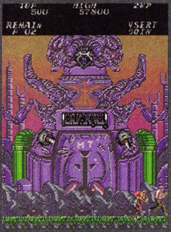
THE KONAMI CODE



Contra wasn't the first NES game to feature the legendary Konami Code (that honor goes to Gradius), but it is the game that the code is most closely associated with. By entering the code—Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A—at the title screen, you could start the game with 30 lives (10 times the normal amount), thus turning normal gaming grunts into supersoldiers.

INSERT COIN?

The NES version of Contra wasn't arcade-perfect—but in some ways it was actually better. Though its graphics weren't as detailed, the NES version moved more quickly and smoothly, and the levels were expanded with new hazards and power-ups to provide a more satisfying experience.



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MATURE 17+

M

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

HELLO my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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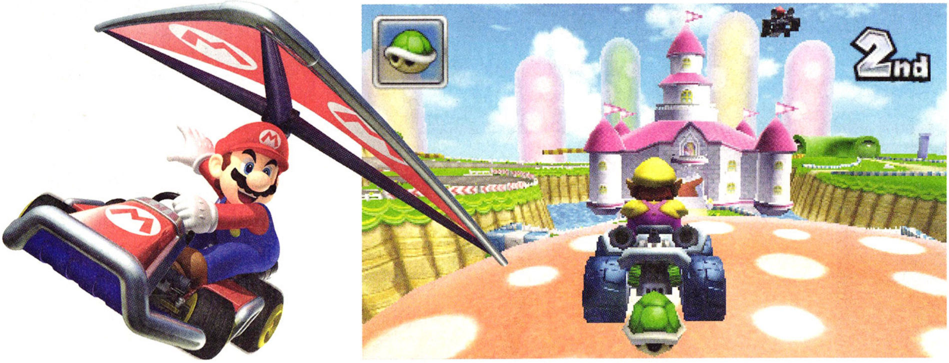
Grab your bananas! Mario and company take to the road (and the sky...and the sea) in Mario Kart 7.



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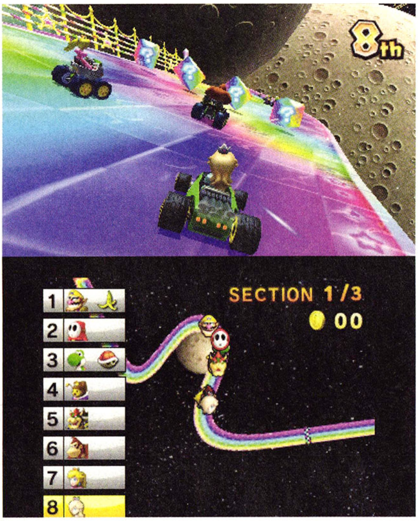


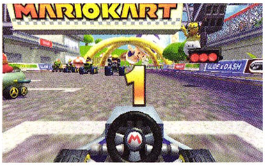
MARIO KART 7

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It seems as though in recent hardware generations a Nintendo system—whether a console or a handheld—doesn't fully come into its own until a Mario Kart title is released for it. Nintendo is wasting no time with the N3DS: a new entry in the beloved racing series is already upon us. Perhaps not surprisingly, Mario Kart 7 doesn't deviate all that much from the beloved series formula, though it does feature a few tweaks and enhancements. This isn't a bad thing—more Mario Kart is always welcome.

The biggest twist (and the one that Nintendo advertises on the game's box art) is each kart's ability to alter its form midrace to accommodate flying and underwater sequences. I was initially skeptical about how these sorts of environmental changes would affect the flow of the race, but I was pleased to discover that they always feel like a natural part of the course, and actually add new elements of strategy to the race rather than distract from the action. Admittedly, the underwater racing bits are the least exciting of the two new play types. Instead of having a full range of motion while in the drink, your kart simply travels along the seabed. As in most games, being underwater alters the physics of the world—the kart slides a bit more when making high-speed turns, and hitting a jump causes it to bounce a bit higher, but aside from those matters it's pretty much the same as driving on land.



Flying segments, although brief, provide greater thrills. As soon as you hit a blue Boost Pad, your kart sprouts a glider and takes to the skies. Here you have a full range of movement: you can raise your vehicle upward, dive toward the ground, and steer around obstacles and above the track. It's not long before you run out of the momentum needed to stay airborne and must return to the ground, but the time spent in the air is quite exhilarating. It opens up a whole new way of looking at each course, and a daring pilot can easily bypass solid chunks of the race course by gliding over kart-slowing grassy areas or an otherwise-insurmountable canyon. It's especially satisfying when looking down at racers who were unlucky enough to miss the launch pad.

Little moments like these—when you're sailing over your competition—are actually fairly common thanks to some fantastic track design. The three modes of travel (land, sea, and air) gave the designers all sorts of freedom in creating courses with alternate routes and shortcuts aplenty. Replaying races multiple times is a necessity for discovering the best route to take in order to shave precious seconds (and milliseconds) off of your time. Some tracks clearly place an emphasis on one of the vehicles' special modes with segments that require all racers to fly or dive, but the best tracks make these portions purely optional. In these cases, it's up to the player to make the decision to, say, dive underwater or steer around the drink and remain on land.

A few of the new tracks do away with the laps convention, instead relying on a continuous, rally-style race (divided into three segments to echo the other tracks' three-lap standard). Although there is only a handful of such courses in the game, they're quite enjoyable to traverse. They do eliminate the ability to experiment with new shortcuts and timesaving tricks with each successive lap, but they encourage you to drive a perfect race in one long stretch (the lack of repetitive scenery doesn't hurt, either).

Of course, making your way to the finish line is only part of the fun in Mario Kart. There's also the not-at-all-insignificant issue of the items at your disposal. Goodies like shells and bananas that you've come to love over the years have returned, and all function much as they did in previous games. One exception is the blue Spiny Shell, which loses the wings it had sprouted in recent installments. Instead of flying straight to the race leader to deliver its explosive payload, it now skids along the track, taking out any racers unfortunate enough to get in its way. This enhanced destructive power makes races much more dynamic and gives the game a more classic feel along the lines of Mario Kart 64.

Additionally, there are three new items to collect,

Wheelmen

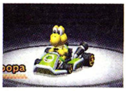
With 16 characters to choose from in Mario Kart 7, there's a driver for everybody. Still, we all have favorites that we find ourselves choosing again and again. Here are the NP crew's top racers.

CHRIS SLATE
I always intend to try different characters, but there are so many to choose from that my brain freezes up and I end up sticking with Mario.

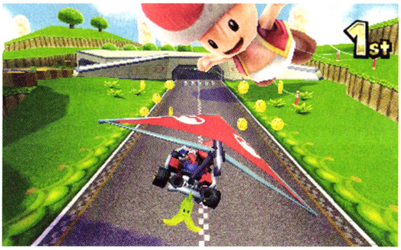
STEVE THOMASON
I almost always choose Luigi because, despite what the propaganda machine (and Chris Slate) might have you believe, he's the best Mario brother. There, I said it.

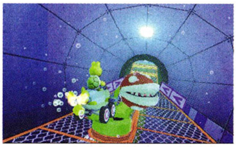
CHRIS HOFFMAN
Pretty much anyone but Donkey Kong. In my experience, primates just don't belong behind the wheel of a fast-moving vehicle.

JUSTIN CHENG
Rosalina. She's not one of my all-time favorite characters or anything—although I liked her well enough in Super Mario Galaxy—but I tend to do well when I choose her.



PHIL THEOBALD
Ever since the original Super Mario Kart, I've had an affinity for Koopa Troopa. I'm not entirely sure why. It probably has something to do with the fact that he's both adorable and evil.

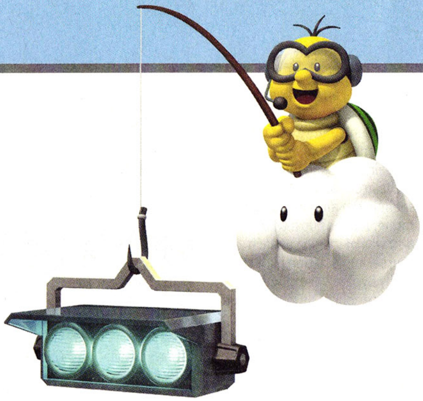


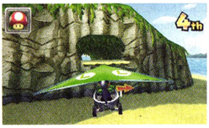


[Above] It's a little-known fact that Piranha Plants thrive underwater.

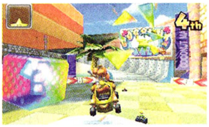
Track Attack

There are plenty of new courses on which to race in Mario Kart 7, but one of the game's attractions is the inclusion of classic tracks from previous entries in the series. Although they all give us warm, nostalgic fuzzies, there are a few raceways that stand out from the rest.

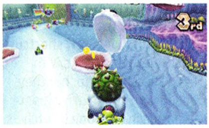




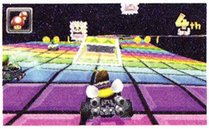
KOOPA BEACH (Mario Kart 64, N64)
This is one of the first tracks in Mario Kart 64, and it remains among the series's best. It's not a terribly complicated course, but its tight design is filled with speed-boosting ramps and useful shortcuts.



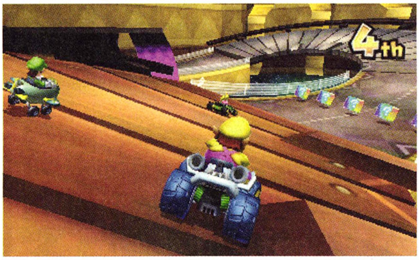
COCONUT MALL (Mario Kart Wii, Wii)
This track leads you through a multilevel mall filled with branching paths, escalators, and fountains. Cap it off with a trip through the car-packed parking lot, and you end up with a frantic race.



DAISY CRUISER
(Mario Kart: Double Dash!!, GC)
A cruise ship seems an odd place to hold a race, but why not? This course is filled with numerous tight turns and a room where the ocean's current causes tables to slide around the room. In a slight change from the original version of this track, the secret engine-room area is now flooded.



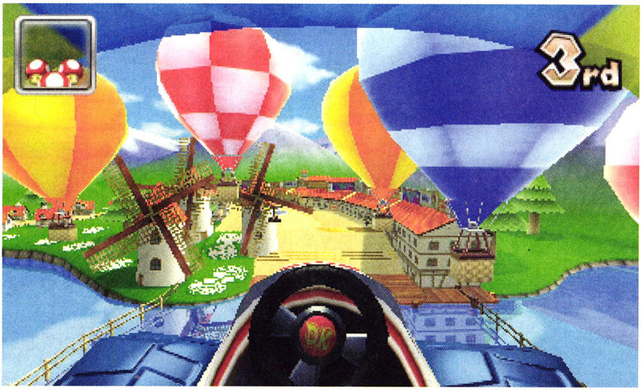
RAINBOW ROAD
(Super Mario Kart, SNES)
This was the final track in the original Mario Kart title. Its colorful graphics amazed us back in the day, and thanks to its complete lack of barriers to prevent us from driving off into the yawning void of space, it still makes for a challenging race.



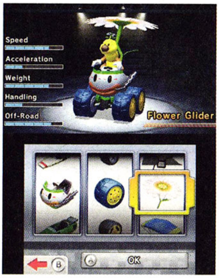
all of which add strategy and technique to the action. The Fire Flower, with its ability to rapidly shoot fireballs, can be extremely useful when you're near a pack of opponents. The Tanooki (raccoon) tail provided by the Super Leaf works wonderfully as either a defensive (to ward off incoming shells) or offensive (to knock out rivals) tool. The final new item, the rarely seen Lucky 7, is one of those extremely powerful bonuses that only seem to pop up for racers near the back of the pack. Considering that it instantly gives you seven items at once, it can be a game-changer. Expect a lot of excited yelling when someone snags the Lucky 7.

You might do some more yelling when playing against computer opponents on the upper difficulty levels. The series's notorious "rubber-band AI" is back in full force. In addition to the aforementioned power-up preference for trailing racers, it seems like no matter how perfect your steering is and no matter how skilled your item shots are, the computer-controlled opponents will always find a way to catch up to you. And boy, it seems like those other racers get a blue Spiny Shell only when you're in first place. We've come to expect this behavior out of Mario Kart over the years, but it can still be frustrating.

The best way to avoid that frustration is to take advantage of Mario Kart 7's ample multiplayer options. There's support for both local and online play for up to eight racers, so there is no excuse for not getting in a little game time with your friends. In fact, Mario Kart 7 makes it easier than ever to play with others thanks to the new Community feature. By joining or creating Communities, you can enjoy races with groups of people without the need to first exchange Friend Codes. Each Community also has an online leaderboard, fostering rivalries within the group.



[Above] Statistically, air travel is safer than driving, but not when you fly through a bunch of hot-air balloons.



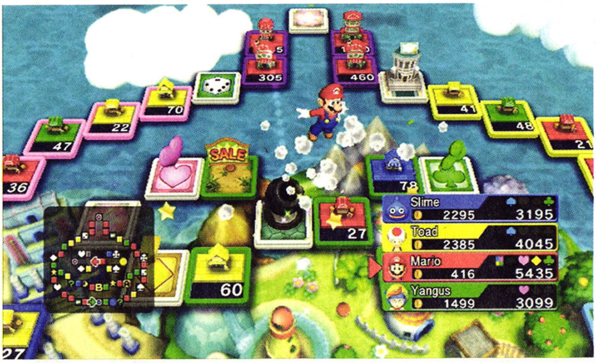
(Thankfully, like in Mario Kart Wii, it's difficult to pull off the infamous "snaking" maneuver while driving in Mario Kart 7, so competing with other people won't be as maddening as it became in Mario Kart DS.) Along with the standard racing of the multiplayer Grand Prix and Vs. modes, there is also the arena-style fighting of Balloon Battle (pop your opponents' balloons) and Coin Runners (collect more coins than your foes) modes. These action-packed contests are Mario Kart staples, and they add some welcome variety to the festivities.

Another added benefit to playing multiplayer is unlocking characters. The method for doing so is a bit more stringent this time around—you need to place first in a cup on the highest difficulty level (150cc). Previous Mario Kart games spaced out the hidden characters throughout the difficulty levels, so players could slowly work their way up through the ranks and discover new secrets as they progressed. Here, though, everything is saved for the expert players. Fortunately, if you play Grand Prix mode with other people, as long as a human driver places first, all players earn the hidden character.

It's not just new characters that skilled players will discover here. Performing well (specifically, collecting coins scattered around the tracks) unlocks parts that allow you to customize your kart—a first for the series. This new feature brings yet another strategic component to the game. Each of the available parts—body, tires, and gliders—alters the kart's stats, so you can tweak your kart to suit your style of racing. It's a bit surprising that it took this long for the customization feature to appear, and hopefully it will stick around in future games. Something that doesn't necessarily need to stay, though, is the new first-person mode. It's a cute enough gimmick and the effect of seeing the race from the character's perspective mixes well with the system's 3D capabilities, but Mario Kart simply isn't designed for this point of view. You'll want to check it out a few times, but it's unlikely that any serious kart racer will play that way for more than a couple of minutes. The motion controls that are tethered to this view work well—much like the motion controls in Mario Kart Wii—but since you're forced to be in first-person to use them, they become little more than a novelty.

If you're not playing a "serious" race, though, a little novelty can be fun, and isn't that what this series is about? Mario Kart 7 certainly delivers on that front with some excellent track design, the solid controls that we've come to expect from the series, and some worthwhile additions (like added items and the ability to fly). Some excellent titles have appeared on the N3DS lately, and Mario Kart 7 is one of the finest. **—PHIL T.**

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.



One shop alone a throne ne'er maketh! I shall rule this district forthwith and forthright!

Dragonlord
Stocks 0
Ready cash 1590
Net worth 2000

Mariopoly

FORTUNE STREET

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The most important thing to remember when starting Fortune Street is that it is not Mario Party. Sure, the screenshots make it look similar—it has Mario and friends wandering around a massive board game, but aside from that surface detail, the two titles couldn't be more different. Fortune Street is the US debut of a long-running series that has been popular in Japan since 1991. This latest incarnation features characters from both the Mario and Dragon Quest universes. It may seem like an odd crossover, but why not—Toad and Yoshi hobnobbing with Slime and Yangus? Sounds fun to us. (The clever banter between the characters reinforces that fun.)

Inspiration clearly comes from the classic board game Monopoly. Players move around the board, purchase properties, and fork over cash when they land on opponents' spaces. There are actually two rule sets: Under the "easy" set, players benefit by owning connected properties. Things get more interesting with the "standard" rules, which have the game board divided into multiple districts, and players earn extra cash by investing in stocks for the districts that they feel will grow in value as the game progresses.

Both rule sets are enjoyable, but the standard version is especially engaging. Success with that rulebook requires ample planning and more than a little risk-taking. It's a careful balancing act to purchase/improve the right properties and invest in the districts most likely to grow, and when four players are all attempting to outthink each other, it leads to some exciting matches. Additionally, the game boards are well-designed. There are a few basic layouts that are good for beginners, but later boards have some unorthodox routes, and moving segments create nice risk/reward scenarios.

The gameplay does tend to suffer from uneven pacing in standard mode, however. Due to the nature of the rules, the first chunk of a session can be pretty slow and somewhat tedious. Things don't really get exciting until all of the properties have been taken and players begin investing their money. Like in Monopoly, games also tend to run long. Don't be surprised if you spend an hour or two circling the board before someone earns enough money to win—if you're having friends over for a game, know that it may not be a quick one. The CPU opponents provide a solid challenge, but human rivals can't be topped. And although the online-play support is great, it's way more fun to see the look on your friends' faces when you force them into a buyout.

Fortune Street may not be as fast-paced as the Mario Party series, and it's liable to bore young players with its financial theme and lack of minigames, but for players looking for a serious board game, there's a lot to enjoy here. **—PHIL T.**

Another acquisition for Moonbrooke! How very exciting!

Princessa
Stocks 450
Ready cash 427
Net worth 3747

Press the A Button or shake the Wii Remote.

Wario 1500 1500
Bowser 1500 1500
Peach 1500 1500
Guest F 1500 1500

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME-RELATED HOLIDAY MEMORY?

JUSTIN CHENG

I was all about Turtle Power as a kid, and I was absolutely thrilled when I received Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles for the NES. Unfortunately, this excitement quickly turned into disappointment when I actually played the game, but that's beside the point....

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Probably when I received the Super NES way back in 1991. I spent the rest of the day stomping Koopas in Super Mario World and piledriving punks with Haggar in Final Fight.

CODY MARTIN

The year that I unwrapped my first video game console—my Super NES. Although I can only pick out pieces of that magical memory (I was five years old), my SNES has brought me countless hours of fun, even to this day.

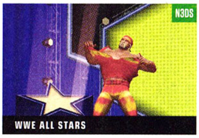
PHIL THEOBALD

While home alone, I "accidentally" stumbled across an NES in my parents' closet a few weeks before receiving it for the holidays. Of course, I also "accidentally" hooked it up for a quick game.

STEVE THOMASON

It has to be the year my brother and I received an NES. Unfortunately, he also received The Legend of Zelda while I was "gifted" Hogan's Alley. He continues to taunt me about that to this day.

WWE ALL STARS



WWE ALL STARS

WWE ALL STARS

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **THQ SAN DIEGO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Though the Nintendo 3DS version of WWE All Stars is basically the same arcade-style wrestling game that was released on Wii earlier this year, the N3DS version is superior in numerous ways. The exaggerated character models and over-the-top gameplay really haven't changed at all, but there are lots of little tweaks that go a long way toward creating a more polished game—characters now perform their prematch taunts before the bell rings, for example, and there are no more weird crunching sound effects when you walk around. More importantly, the 3D looks great, and the visual special effects that indicate your character's status (stunned, powered up, etc.) are fully implemented, making it much easier to follow the action. On top of that, the game features a dozen additional unlockable characters and two new modes. The Score Scramble match isn't anything special, but the Gauntlet mode provides a fun test for your grappling skills. However, the developers evidently had a tough time adapting the controls to the N3DS; you now counterstrike by pressing Up on the Control Pad, which is almost impossible to do while you're moving your superstar with the Circle Pad. Other than that and some annoying load times, though, my complaints are few. —**CHRIS H.**

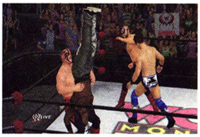
The More Things Change...

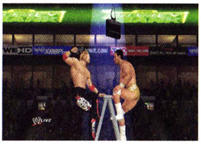
WWE '12

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **YUKE'S YOKOHAMA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

"The Million-Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase used to say that your mouth shouldn't write checks that your body can't cash. In the case of WWE '12, the publishers shouldn't have declared that the game was going to be "bigger, badder, better" than previous WWE endeavors when it's mostly more of the same. That's not to say that WWE '12 is terrible or anything. The action is solid, the feature list is vast, and some enhancements were indeed made—the animation is smoother, for example, and some of the character likenesses are pretty impressive. On the other hand, some of the visuals just don't cut the mustard (the crowd looks like it was rendered on a PS1), the grapple system is a step backward, and the action seems sluggish at times. There are collision issues and pathfinding weirdness, as well, and even with manual targeting enabled it's hard to focus on the opponent you desire in multiman matches. My biggest complaint, though, is with the main single-player mode: Road to WrestleMania. In past WWE games you could choose from numerous characters and experience unique stories with multiple branches and optional goals; now there's only one linear (albeit lengthy) story path with no choice of characters and almost zero options. The mode is scripted to a fault; it feels like you don't have any control over the way a match plays out. (I know pro wrestling is staged, but this is ridiculous.) There's fun to be had in WWE '12, but with each iteration of the franchise, it feels like bigger changes are needed for the series to stay relevant. —**CHRIS H.**





[Above] The boss fights are among Skyward Sword's highlights.

The Last Word on Skyward Sword

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD

RATING: 9.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

This is it. The game that Nintendo fans have been awaiting for years is finally here. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword—the game that promises to be the biggest Zelda game ever, that promises to explore the origins of the Master Sword, that promises to reinvigorate the Zelda formula—has arrived. Does it live up to the hype? In a lot of ways, yes; in some ways, no. But what matters is that it's truly worthy of being called "epic."

As you'd expect from a game in this beloved series, Skyward Sword boasts the highest production values possible on the Wii console. The new visual style—realistically proportioned characters with cartoon-style shading—looks fantastic, and the watercolor backdrops provide a uniquely artistic way to deal with draw-distance issues. The environments are brimming with details, too. In Link's homeworld of Skyloft, every room is packed with authentic touches—carvings on desks, decorations inside cabinets, vases on shelves—that make the world come alive, and many of the objects are interactive. The music is great, as well; although the tunes aren't necessarily as memorable as those in many Zelda games, the orchestrated music provides an air of majesty throughout the adventure.

But Skyward Sword isn't just about snazzy new graphics and music. It's about meaningful changes to the Zelda formula that permeate nearly every aspect of the game. Don't worry, diehard fans—this game still delivers on everything associated with the Legend of Zelda name (including a vast fantasy world, cool items, brain-bending puzzles, and sword-swinging action), but each component is now topped with distinctive touches that make Skyward Sword the most refreshing Zelda game to hit a console in years; this ain't just another sequel.

Leading the list of changes, of course, is the new Wii MotionPlus control scheme. One-to-one gesture-based sword manipulation has been a major selling point of Skyward Sword since the game was first revealed, and it works pretty darn well in the final product. It takes a little practice to get comfortable using direction-specific

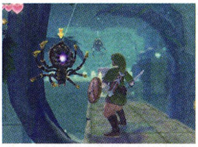
sword strikes, but once you get a handle on it, it's a lot of fun. The need to pay attention to how you swing your blade adds a new dynamic to almost every enemy encounter, especially in boss battles, in which using the right type of swing to breach a foe's defenses is often crucial for victory.

Likewise, the new controls for item use help the gameplay feel fresh. I was initially worried that having to use a variety of motion- and pointer-based controls rather than a traditional button press for each item would interfere with the action, but that isn't an issue in the slightest. Every action—from aiming the slingshot to throwing bombs to cracking the whip—is completely intuitive and never detracts from the experience. At times I was forced to recalibrate my controller or recenter the pointer in the thick of the action, but those instances were few and far between; for the most part the game does a great job working within the limitations of the Wii MotionPlus accessory. The new stamina gauge keeps things interesting, too; though it seems like a hindrance at first ("What? I can't run as much as I want?"), it's put to innovative use almost constantly.

The biggest shakeup to the Zelda formula, however, comes not from the controls or the play mechanics, but from the overall structure. As promised

Dungeon-Crawler

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword features only seven dungeons, but they're all impressively designed and full of danger. Here are our thoughts on the latest batch of enemy abodes, rated on a scale of one Octorok (pretty awesome) to three Octoroks (superawesome).



SKYVIEW TEMPLE: This first dungeon you visit is somewhat on the generic side, but it's still fun and offers plenty of places for you to use the Beetle. You go head-to-head against Ghirahim at the end.

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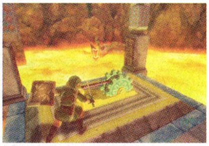

EARTH TEMPLE: The Earth Temple is your typical fire dungeon. You'll spend a lot of time navigating lava flows and blowing things up with bombs. The boss, Scaldera, is quite impressive.

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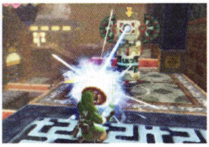

LANAYRU MINING FACILITY: This dungeon is cool for a couple of reasons. First, it feels like it is indeed a mining facility, and it has several obstacles that reflect that design, Second, it requires you to alter the environment using Timeshift Stones, which leads to some fantastic puzzles.

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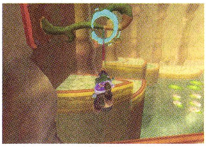

ANCIENT CISTERN: The Ancient Cistern's upper levels are strikingly beautiful, but its basement is absolutely creepy. This duality, along with neat underwater sections, whip-based puzzles, and one of the coolest bosses in the game, add up to one of our favorite areas.

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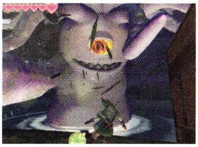

SANDSHIP: Another dungeon that breaks the typical mold, the Sandship is a run-down pirate ship, which is pretty cool in itself. More Timeshift Stone puzzles and a legendary boss fight make this dungeon another winner.

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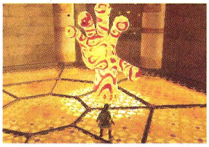

FIRE SANCTUARY: That's right—two fire dungeons in one game. Fortunately, this one boasts an entirely different approach to its design and throws new obstacles into the mix. It's just too bad that the boss fight—another clash with Ghirahim—isn't as interesting.

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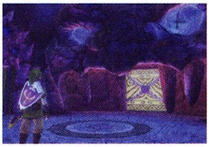


SKY KEEP: The final dungeon is certainly challenging, but many of the concepts are recycled from previous areas. The ability to manipulate the dungeon layout is pretty cool, though. There's no boss.

●●○

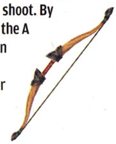
Tools of the Trade

Among the biggest draws of any Legend of Zelda game are the items that Link acquires and uses on his quest, and in Skyward Sword they're more immersive than ever thanks to the new Wii MotionPlus-enhanced controls. There are eight items in all (not counting a few context-sensitive ones), and we've ranked them here from favorite to least-favorite.

1 **BEETLE:** The flying drone known as the Beetle can significantly change the way you play a Legend of Zelda game. Using this device, you can safely scope out areas so you can see what dangers lie ahead, and you can use it to attack enemies or grab hard-to-reach pickups.

2 **CLAWSHOTS:** The Clawshots really aren't any different than they were in Twilight Princess, but using them to zip from point to point like a green-hatted Spider-Man never gets old.

3 **BOW:** The bow is another old standby that's fun to use and easy to control—you just point and shoot. By holding down the A Button you can zoom in on your target for more-precise aim.



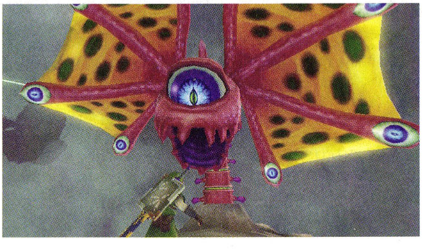
4 **GUST BELLOWS:** Though an item that emits a stream of air might not sound very exciting, it's put to use in lots of cool ways. You can reveal secrets buried under sand and use it to run certain machinery.

5 **BOMBS:** The simple addition of gesture controls to toss a bomb overhead or roll it like a bowling ball make this explosive mainstay—dare I say it?—a blast.

6 **WHIP:** The whip isn't very effective in combat, but it's fun using it to swing from objects, Indiana Jones-style, or to activate levers from afar. You can even use it to snag items from enemies.

7 **BUG NET:** Yep, it's a bug net. It's very useful for catching things so you can upgrade potions and equipment, but it's not terribly thrilling.

8 **SLINGSHOT:** The slingshot is pretty useful at first, but once you get a bow, the slingshot isn't gonna see much action.



by the game's creators, the lines between overworld and dungeon are more blurred than ever, and the old rules of progression don't always apply. The overworld is "over" in a very literal sense—you soar above the clouds atop your Loftwing bird so you can travel to floating islands where you'll meet NPCs, gather clues, visit shops, play minigames, and figure out where to go next. There's not a lot to do while you're flying through the wide-open skies; it's actually somewhat comparable to sailing the seas in The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (albeit without the need to use an item every time you want to change direction).

Fortunately, you'll find plenty to keep you active when you descend to the world below, which is broken up into three distinct provinces: Faron Woods, Eldin Volcano, and Lanayru Desert. Unlike most Legend of Zelda exterior environments, these regions focus less on exploration and more on solving environmental puzzles or overcoming specific challenges as you try to find your next destination. Longtime Zelda players may miss the more open-ended, interconnected worlds of past games, but this structure provides a nice change of pace. Besides, there are still plentiful secrets to find off the beaten path.

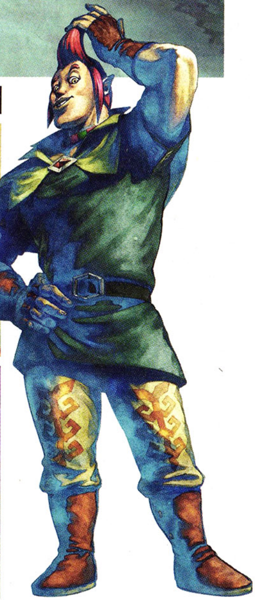
Furthermore, the developers have managed to pack a ridiculous amount of content into the trio of provinces. Three regions might not sound like a lot, but each one is fairly large and serves multiple purposes throughout Link's quest. In past Zelda titles you could often visit an area, complete a task, and then never return. Skyward Sword, on the other hand, makes great use of its geography, requiring players to visit its environs numerous times, often granting access to previously unseen locations or presenting twists that add gripping new dimensions to the gameplay. The best example is when you must visit each area's Silent Realm and undertake a brief but challenging quest under the threat of failure if you take even a single enemy hit. (It's not as tough as it sounds, but it's definitely intense!) Admittedly, there are a few times when the repurposing of environments feels unnecessary (particularly one part near the end of the game when you have to complete an underwater collection quest), but for the most part you won't want to put the controller down.

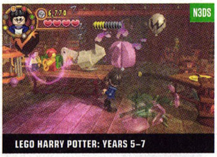
The dungeons are incredibly compelling as well. They're crammed with nifty puzzles, clever item-use opportunities, and neat gimmicks that help each dungeon feel unique (see the "Dungeon-Crawler" sidebar for more details). The challenge is spot-on, and frustration is kept to a minimum; unlike in some Zelda games, there are no Water Temple-style groaners here. I especially appreciate the way the dungeons are integrated into the story and the game world; most of them feel like they serve a real purpose within the narrative—they aren't just there for their own sake. Naturally, each dungeon is capped with a boss battle, and these are among the best in the series. The confrontations against the six-armed Koloktos and the gargantuan Tentalus are nothing short of spectacular.

Even the story manages to add intriguing new layers to the Legend of Zelda mythos. The tale not only delves into the origins of the Master Sword and Hyrule, but it establishes what's arguably the most meaningful connection between Link and Zelda that the series has yet seen. The supporting characters are pretty memorable, too. Ghirahim is a villain unlike any other in the franchise, and Link's pompous rival, Groose, steals almost every scene that he's in. Unfortunately, Fi (the spirit contained within Link's sword) can't hold a candle to Midna or some of Link's past sidekicks. Additionally, hardcore fans may be somewhat let down that Skyward Sword doesn't directly tie into the Hyrule origin stories from past games and that the tale doesn't fit perfectly into the established continuity.

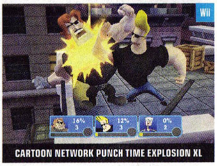
There are a few other reasons to nit-pick. For example, the new shield gauge discourages you from using defensive tactics in combat; the game's interactive musical component—the Goddess Harp—is too simplistic to enhance the gameplay at all; and the lack of voice acting holds back the presentation a bit. But these are extremely minor issues in a game that, as a whole, delivers what may be the most satisfying adventure available on Wii. From aesthetics to level design, Nintendo's latest pretty much has it all—there's even a Hero Mode second quest for players who want a greater challenge. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword is without a doubt worth the wait. —**CHRIS H.**

[Right] Groose seems like a jerk, but he ends up being pretty likeable.

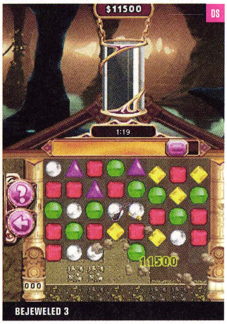




LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 5–7



CARTOON NETWORK PUNCH TIME EXPLOSION XL



BEJEWELED 3

Block-Rockin' Wizardry

LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 5–7

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **TT GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

If you've played any of the other LEGO-ified game versions of popular films, you already know what to expect from this formulaic take on the latter half of Harry Potter's epic magical adventures. Running around to smash scenery, collect studs, fetch items, and use fan-favorite spells to solve light puzzles yields a satisfying if somewhat repetitive grind that's aimed primarily at a youngish crowd.

Still, LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 gets by on the strength of the source material and the inherent fun of reliving key moments from the final three books in the *Harry Potter* series, filtered through the always-wacky LEGO lens. Shaking down every nook and cranny of Hogwarts and beyond to nab studs is certainly addictive, and each bustling scene is littered with goodies and secrets to uncover. Thankfully, wizard duels, flying sequences, and other special sections also help break up some of the monotony of the exploratory smash-and-grabbing.

Given that magic is such an integral part of the Harry Potter universe, it's nice to see that the spell system is well-implemented. Wielding Expelliarmus to make mischief with fellow wizards-in-training or summoning a Patronus to ward off Dementors provides some simple amusements, and using other incantations, such as Wingardium Leviosa, to assemble LEGO blocks unites the two universes nicely. Additional spells are introduced at a steady clip, and the way they're often tied to unlocking previously inaccessible areas makes learning a new one an exciting prospect.

Overall, the developers did an excellent job of taking the vivid fantasy settings and dynamic characters that make the *Harry Potter* series so enjoyable and weaving them together seamlessly with the LEGO universe in a way that's both authentic and fun. Although the gameplay is predictable and repetitive at times, it's easy to overlook once you get sucked into this magical LEGO realm. **—NATHAN M.**

LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 5–7

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **TT GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Despite the fact that LEGO games are released with such frequency that the once-novel concept has become rather stale, I like LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7. The combination of Harry Potter and LEGO works as well as it did in last year's Wii and DS games, the graphics are sharp, and the 3D effect gives everything a feeling of depth. The cut-scenes are amusing, too, even if they will make little sense to those who aren't familiar with the original source material. It's a shame, though, that this title suffers from the same technical issues that afflicted the N3DS versions of LEGO Star Wars III and LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean—namely, a less-than-consistent frame rate and irritating load times. **—JUSTIN C.**

CARTOON NETWORK PUNCH TIME EXPLOSION XL

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **PAPAYA STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

This game is nearly identical to its N3DS predecessor—you still pit Cartoon Network characters against each other in Smash Bros.-inspired combat, but the XL version includes eight more contenders and has miscellaneous content tacked on. Unfortunately, these additions don't compensate for an otherwise-lazy port. The new characters play like reskinned copies of old ones, and little effort was made to incorporate them into the story mode. And while the platformer-style campaign certainly has its high points, the clunky fighting mechanics bog down the experience. Despite its clever aping, Punch Time Explosion XL isn't as fun or fluid as Super Smash Bros. Brawl. You're much better off playing the latter, especially since both titles are available for the same console. **—CODY M.**

BEJEWELED 3

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **POPCAP GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Very little has changed about the core gameplay in PopCap's flagship match-three puzzler over the years, but Bejeweled 3 is addictive nonetheless. You still string together like-colored gem combinations to earn points and level up; it's the unlockable play modes that really give this entry some added weight. Earning achievements opens up new ways to play. Whether you're saving butterflies, chaining certain colors to craft poker hands, or mining for treasure, each new mode offers its own exciting twist on the traditional gameplay. There's even a beefy Quest mode loaded with additional minigames to explore. For a title that still looks and plays very much like its predecessors, Bejeweled 3 certainly isn't lacking in content or fun. **—NATHAN M.**

“THANK YOU MARIO! BUT OUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE!”

—TOAD, SUPER MARIO BROS., 1985

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Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

A Tale of Two Hedgehogs

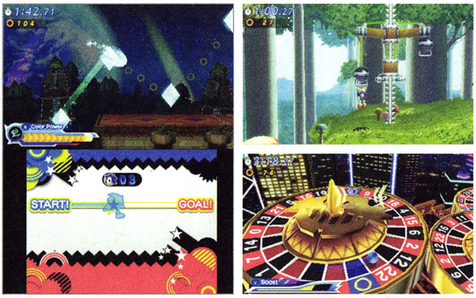
SONIC GENERATIONS

RATING: 8.0

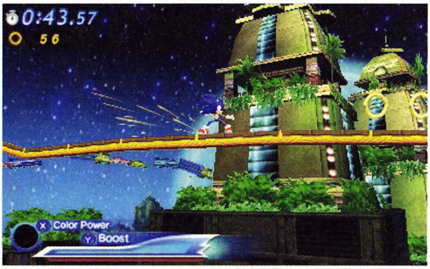
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM/DIMPS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

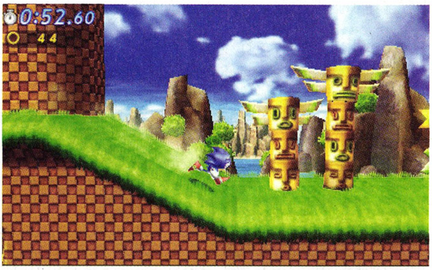
The Sonic community has long been divided between two groups. On one hand you have older players who long for the days of momentum-based platforming, and on the other you have a younger audience weaned on a strict regimen of unfettered speed. In honor of the Blue Blur's 20th anniversary, Sega has attempted to bring these disparate factions together with Sonic Generations. It's a game in which new meets old—quite literally—as a time rift brings the modern, green-eyed Sonic face to face with his classic, pot-bellied persona. The unlikely team-up proves a success for the most part and should indeed satisfy fans of all ages.

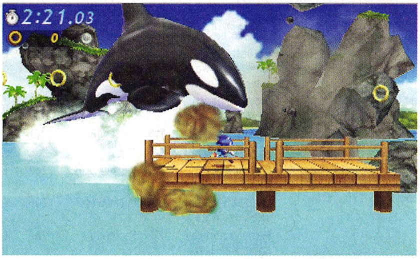
Taking the anniversary concept even further, the game's worlds comprise seven locales plucked from throughout the franchise's history. Your run down memory lane includes such favorites as the original Sonic title's Green Hill Zone, Sonic Adventure's Emerald Coast, and Tropical Resort from last year's Sonic Colors. Each of these worlds is divided into two acts—you'll tackle one with classic Sonic and one with the modern hedgehog. The classic-Sonic acts play a lot like the old Genesis games—far more so than even the recent Sonic the Hedgehog 4 on WiiWare. The physics still don't feel completely faithful to the 16-bit titles, but they're pretty darn close and provide Sega's fleet-footed mascot with a convincing sense of momentum. Likewise, the level design once again puts as much emphasis on platforming as it does on speed. (Though all of the environments come from previous titles, the stages themselves are entirely new in terms of layout.) Sonic Team and Dimps even got the little details right; classic Sonic has to jump on spring pads rather than simply run into them, for example. All in all, this is as close to vintage Sonic as we've seen since



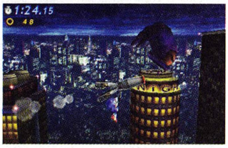
[Above-left] The Wisp power-ups from Sonic Colors return in Tropical Resort.







[Below] If someone builds an actual NiGHTS hotel, we promise to stay there.



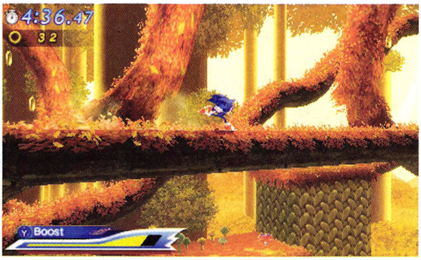
1994's Sonic & Knuckles, and the formula holds brilliantly.

Modern Sonic's acts are probably most reminiscent of the Sonic Rush games for Nintendo DS. Though still predominantly side-scrolling, they're more rollercoaster ride than platformer, designed to keep players moving as fast as possible at all times. Furthermore, the Blue Blur has his full repertoire of contemporary moves in these stages—he can execute a speed boost, grind rails, jump off walls, and use a homing attack. As one of those aforementioned old-timers, I enjoyed the classic stages best, but it turns out that going back and forth between the two lends the festivities a nice overall tempo. Series devotees will also get a kick out of seeing new takes on familiar destinations, whether it's the giant roulette table added to the modern version of Casino Night Zone or a side-scrolling interpretation of the killer whale chase from Emerald Coast.

Unfortunately, the developers made one truly bizarre design choice that's sure to stick in the craw of longtime fans. About a third of the way through the game, modern Sonic teaches his classic self the homing attack. (Up to that point, the more-rotund hedgehog can only run, jump, and spin-dash.) This new move significantly alters how the classic stages play, though at least there aren't any instances in which its use is absolutely required. Traditionally minded players can thus ignore it if they're able to exercise restraint, but the addition still seems completely unnecessary and antithetical to what the game is all about.

Nonetheless, classic Sonic definitely steals the show and reminds us why we fell in love with the little guy in the first place. His original design is just so expressive and charming; it has a timeless quality that doesn't do modern Sonic any favors when the two heroes stand side by side. The game also pushes the nostalgia button with all sorts of references to past titles, and there's a particularly amusing exchange near the end that's sure to give even the most jaded fan a chuckle.

Visually, Generations has come a long way since its rough showing at the Electronic Entertainment Expo. The frame rate stays consistently smooth, the environments look stunning, and both Sonics are wonderfully animated (though, again, classic Sonic is the real standout). Cranking up the stereoscopic 3D gives the stages a real sense of depth, and the game takes full advantage by frequently having the Blue Blur move between the background and foreground. The modern stages also include some spectacular set pieces, during which the camera will swing around to give the most impactful view of the action. One of our favorites offers an overhead perspective of Sonic leaping toward the screen as that killer whale launches out of the water right behind him.



Slightly less impressive is the game's length—most players should be able to breeze through the main story mode in an afternoon. That flaw is somewhat mitigated by level designs that encourage replay via multiple routes and ample opportunities for exploration. There's also a two-player versus mode, as well as 100 missions that task you with playing through a level under certain conditions: destroying ten enemies within a time limit, for instance, or reaching the end without taking any damage. Completing missions earns you classic music tracks and concept art from throughout the franchise's history.

Though I wish it lasted a bit longer, Sonic's birthday bash is a nearly pitch-perfect celebration of his storied career. The idea behind the game is an inspired one, and the developers executed it with aplomb. Here's hoping the hedgehog's next 20 years bring more like this. —**STEVE T.**

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

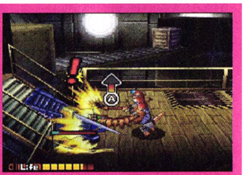
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cars 2: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	269	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Conduit 2	7.5	Sega	266	T
Create	5.0	Electronic Arts	262	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Deca Sports 3	4.5	Hudson	261	E
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
DJ Hero 2	9.0	Activision	262	T
Donkey Kong Country Returns	8.5	Nintendo	262	E
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	XSEED	273	E
FlingSmash	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
GoldenEye 007	8.5	Activision	262	T
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	8.0	MTV	261	T
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	4.0	Electronic Arts	262	T
Kirby's Epic Yarn	8.5	Nintendo	261	E
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Kung Fu Panda 2	2.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Michael Jackson: The Experience	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident	6.0	Nintendo	269	E
Namco Museum Megamix	5.0	Namco Bandai	261	E
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	4.5	Tomy	262	E10+
NASCAR 2011: The Game	3.0	Activision	269	E
NBA 2K11	6.5	2K Sports	261	E
Pac-Man Party	4.5	Namco Bandai	262	E10+
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Rango	5.0	Paramount	266	E10+
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rio	4.0	THQ	267	E
Rock Band 3	9.0	MTV	261	T
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	7.0	Capcom	261	T
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Sonic Colors	9.0	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.0	THQ	266	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	8.0	LucasArts	261	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Thor: God of Thunder	5.5	Sega	267	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters	8.5	Electronic Arts	266	E
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	6.0	Ubisoft	262	T
Top Spin 4	7.0	2K Sports	266	E
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Virtua Tennis 4	8.0	Sega	267	E
Wii Play: Motion	7.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE All Stars	6.5	THQ	266	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	7.5	THQ	262	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	5.0	Atari	261	E
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
Crafting Mama	7.0	Majesco	261	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	8.0	Nintendo	262	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	3.5	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Kung Fu Panda 2	4.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	7.5	Warner Bros.	267	E
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	7.5	Nintendo	262	E
Monster Tale	8.0	Majesco	265	E
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	5.0	Tomy	262	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	9.0	Aksys	262	M
Okamiden	8.0	Capcom	265	E10+
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions	9.0	Nintendo	265	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Radiant Historia	8.5	Atlus	265	E10+
Rango	7.0	Paramount	266	E
Rio	5.5	THQ	267	E
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	8.5	Natsume	262	E

MORE ON:

SOLATOROBO: RED THE HUNTER

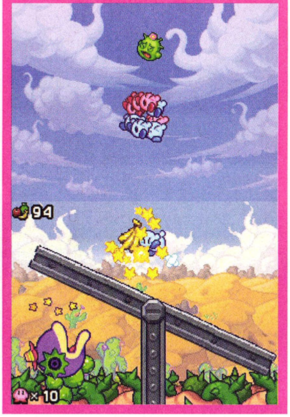


This has quickly become one of my favorite DS titles. Solatorobo is a game that few people are playing—but they should be. It has a charming and unique mix of platformer and action-RPG, with an adventure-packed story. —RANDY N.

MORE ON:

KIRBY MASS ATTACK

Kirby's latest handheld adventure takes quite a turn from his traditional titles. Simultaneously managing 10 of the pink puffballs is a sort of controlled chaos, and frantically flinging them around in boss battles can be exhilarating. Although I still prefer one whole Kirby, this game is well worth a look. —CODY M.



Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Sonic Colors	7.5	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
Super Scribblenauts	8.5	Warner Bros.	261	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	267	E10+
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Autobots/Decepticons	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

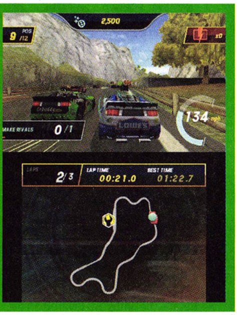
Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
Asphalt 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	266	E10+
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II	8.5	Aksys	268	T
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	7.0	Crave	267	E10+
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Cubic Ninja	4.0	Ubisoft	268	E
Dead or Alive Dimensions	9.0	Tecmo Koei	267	T
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Dual Pen Sports	7.0	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	9.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.5	LucasArts	266	E10+
Madden NFL Football	6.0	Electronic Arts	266	E
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
nintendogs + cats	7.5	Nintendo	266	E
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	7.0	Namco Bandai	269	E10+
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pilotwings Resort	8.0	Nintendo	266	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection 3D	7.0	Crave	268	E10+
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D	6.5	Ubisoft	267	E
Rayman 3D	8.0	Ubisoft	266	E
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	6.0	Natsume	269	E
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	7.5	Capcom	269	M
Ridge Racer 3D	8.0	Namco Bandai	266	E
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles	7.0	Tecmo Koei	266	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3	7.0	Electronic Arts	266	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.5	THQ	267	E
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Steel Diver	8.0	Nintendo	266	E10+
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Super Monkey Ball 3D	7.5	Sega	266	E
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition	9.0	Capcom	266	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars	8.0	Ubisoft	266	T
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	5.5	Ubisoft	267	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	4.0	Activision	270	E10+

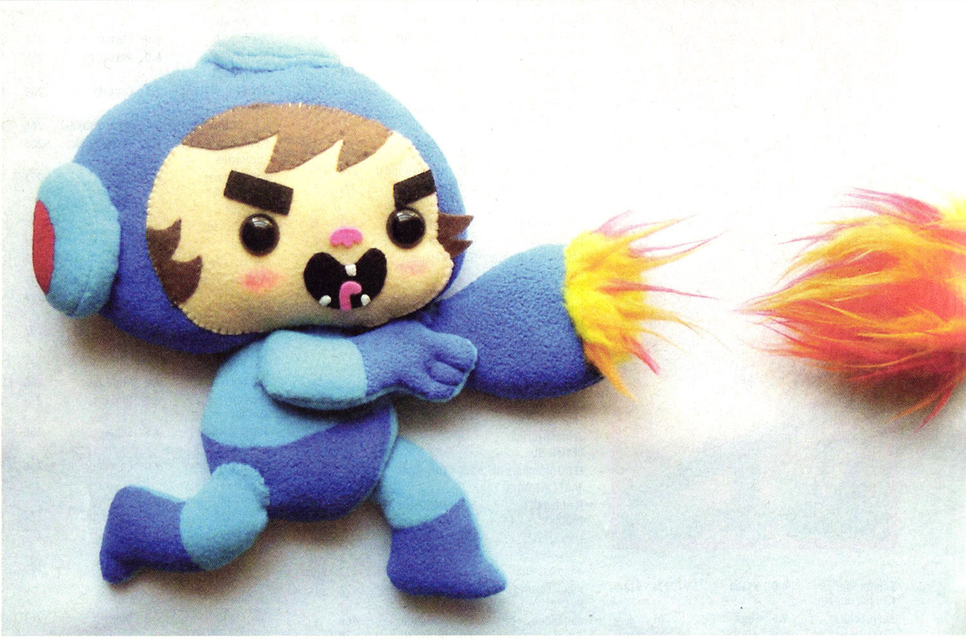
MORE ON:

NASCAR UNLEASHED

I'm not a NASCAR fan, but I'm glad I gave NASCAR Unleashed a shot, as it is a surprisingly fun arcade racer. Yes, the game is far from perfect—the graphics and controls aren't great, and the announcer is annoying—but the overall experience is significantly better than I expected. —JUSTIN C.



COMMUNITY



FANDOM

Mega Plush!

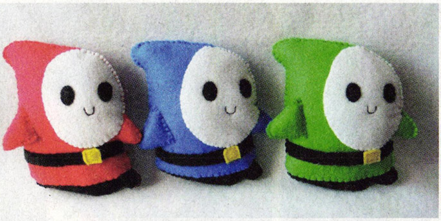
Iconic characters get reimagined as cute homemade plushes.

ONE LOOK AT that Mega Man plush, and you might think its maker spent years honing her craft before constructing such a distinctive and a self-assured creation. It oozes personal style and attention to detail—the limbs are layered on the body and the vibrant colors form a perfect faux-fur fireball.

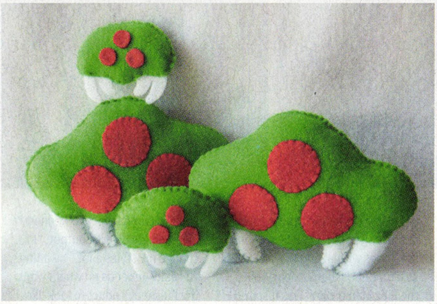
But in reality, Michelle Coffee had been designing and crafting plush toys for only about a year before transforming Mega Man into an adorably rambunctious-looking plaything. The 26-year-old project manager from Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada had painted and occasionally illustrated for years—but in summer 2010, she started stitching together some creations under her own brand, Deadly Sweet.

"It was challenging to learn how to make patterns—as well as which fabrics were more compatible with my designs—and, more importantly, how to sew," admits Coffee. "I had no previous knowledge of sewing; I would always ask my mother to sew buttons back on my shirts and repair hems. I've sure come a long way since those days."

Coffee says she takes a lot of influence from video games, comics, movies, and other media, having designed plushes based on the likes of Doctor Who and Sailor Moon, and she tells us that older games offer her more wiggle room for personal interpretation than modern releases. "I play a lot of games on the NES and Super Nintendo, and that allows me greater design freedom, considering they're just simple sprites and leave you with limitless interpretations," she observes.

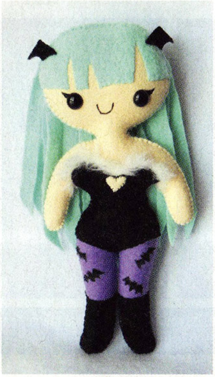


Things are almost always more adorable when they get plushified. How much cuter are these Shy Guys [above] and Metroids [below]?



Mega Man is her favorite and most elaborate work to date, as it was created for a video game-themed art show recently held by Gallery 1988 in Santa Monica, California. Coffee notes that this creation utilized "micro and polar fleece, as well as polyester and wool felt," and that for most of her plushes, she starts with sketches before laying out her own custom patterns. Each project can take between 5 and 20 hours to complete, depending on the complexity of the work.

Considering how strong her plush work is after just over a year of progress, we can't wait to see what she brews up in the future—and she'll have ample opportunity to show it off. Her work is appearing in at least five shows in the coming year. For now, you can keep an eye on her creations at misscoffee.deviantart.com. —**ANDREW H.**



TAKE *your best* SHOT

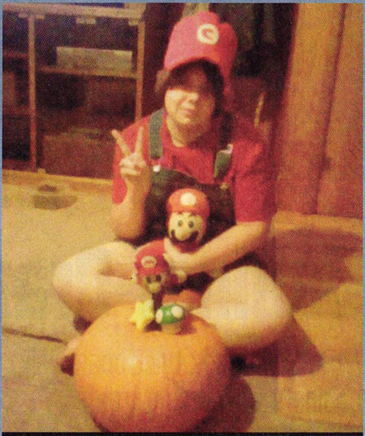
PHOTO CHALLENGE

SEND YOUR PICS TO **photos@nintendopower.com.**

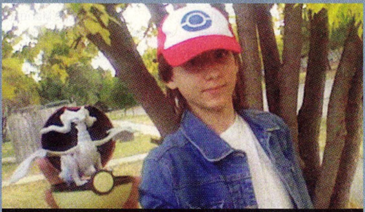
Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: HAPPY HOLIDAYS

VOLUME 272'S THEME: HALLOWEEN



PHOTOGRAPH FROM CAITY B.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM SKEENES

READERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 MUST GET A PARENT'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PHOTO.

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

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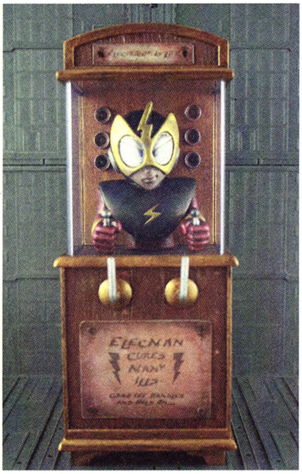
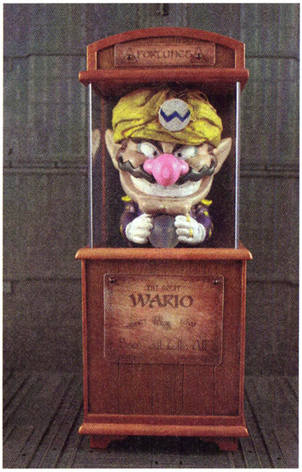
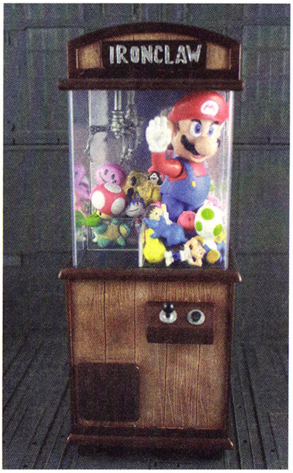






FANDOM

Cabinet-Crazy

A trio of vintage-styled boardwalk cabinets star gaming greats.

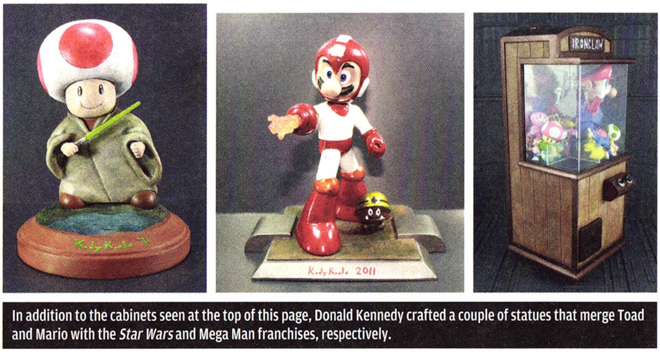
WHETHER IT'S HIS SLEEK and slinky takes on gaming icons such as Princess Peach and Samus Aran or his robotic versions of Mario and Luigi, Donald Kennedy's concoctions are consistently eye-catching. In fact, they've caught ours frequently, as evidenced by the multiple Community pieces spotlighting his work over the last couple years. But his latest project—a series of miniature vintage boardwalk cabinets featuring familiar game characters—may be the El Paso, Texas, native's most exciting work to date.

The idea came to life when the 31-year-old electrical engineer—who has been piecing together custom action-figure creations for six years—noticed a vinyl Wario figure and a fortuneteller coin bank standing side by side in his office. "One day, it just clicked in my head that these would be great together," says Kennedy. "The original bank had a guy in it that had a funny mustache, and Wario has a funny mustache, so I decided to combine them."

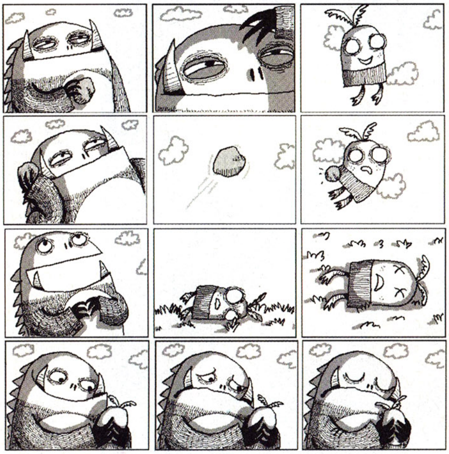
Similarly, the Mario and Elec Man (from Mega Man) cabinets use existing figures within new settings to deliver a fresh effect. The former has the portly plumber stuck inside the glass of a "claw" grabber cabinet after getting too anxious about the prizes within, and it also serves as a functional bank. Meanwhile, the Elec Man project was inspired by research into a real-life classic cabinet that Kennedy says claimed to cure illnesses with electricity. And who's better for the job than Elec Man?

What these photos don't share is that the Wario and Elec Man cabinets use electronics to add extra oomph. Wario's crystal ball lights up, and a sound-alike voice booms out from the plastic enclosure. And Elec Man's cabinet actually vibrates while the colored meters within light up over several seconds. It's these little details that keep us coming back to Kennedy's increasingly diverse output. "I change my styles a lot," he admits. "It really depends on what I want the finished product to look like. I get a vision and I go with it."

He also recently created a couple of curious mash-ups: one that blends Mega Man and Mario, and another that merges Toad with a Jedi from *Star Wars*. And naturally, he's not finished coming up with inventive creations. Next up is a working Mario-inspired Christmas carousel, and he hopes to tackle a Zelda-inspired project in the near future. Kennedy recently started taking commissions for original work, and you can check out more of his output at kodykoala.com. —**ANDREW H.**



In addition to the cabinets seen at the top of this page, Donald Kennedy crafted a couple of statues that merge Toad and Mario with the *Star Wars* and Mega Man franchises, respectively.



FANDOM

Animation Fascination

An indie musician makes rad music videos with his DSi.

EVER SINCE IT LAUNCHED as a free DSiWare application, Flipnote Studio has spurred many creative individuals to produce thousands of interesting animated shorts. One of the most elaborate we've seen comes from a 26-year-old acoustic musician from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who used the program to produce several lengthy music videos for his own tunes using his DSi.

Billy Polard records and releases mellow acoustic songs under the name The Ghost In You, and he's a huge fan of animation. Despite being interested in the art form, though, Polard had never taken a shot at a lengthy animation himself until he picked up the DSi on launch day and discovered Flipnote Studio. "I fell in love with it and figured I should finally make an animation more than three seconds long," he says. "I decided to make a music video, which turned out to be a good idea since I am mostly focused on my music anyway. It was really just another way to get my music out there in a fun way."

The first few attempts to make his video didn't result in anything usable, Polard says, but things came together when he decided to create a storyboard and map out the animations ahead of time. After quickly sketching everything by hand, he drew and animated the individual scenes with a stylus on the Nintendo DSi. One of the best things about Flipnote Studio is its portability, Polard feels, since you can animate when you're on the go or just hanging around.

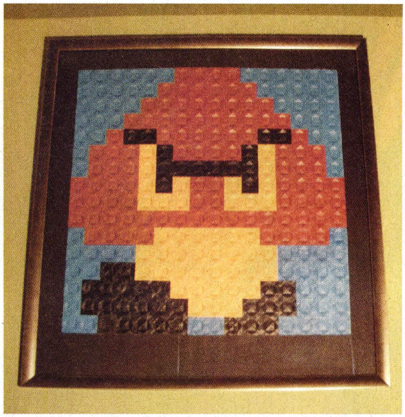
It took about two weeks to sketch several hundred individual frames and put them all together, but he eventually completed an animated music video for his song "Losing Light." Featuring a touching, melancholy story revolving around two monsters, the video struck a chord with online viewers and has gained close to 50,000 hits. Earlier this year Polard created a second music video with Flipnote, only this time it was for a much longer song called "When Our Bedrooms Were Once Haunted." Both songs are included on his new self-titled album, *The Ghost In You*, recently released on iTunes, and the videos can be found online as well.

"The experience I have had animating is really satisfying," adds Polard, who feels it's very rewarding to spend so much time on something that results in a finished product he can be proud of. **—NATHAN M.**

FANDOM

Paper Goomba

Move over, Paper Mario; this origami baddie can play your game, too.

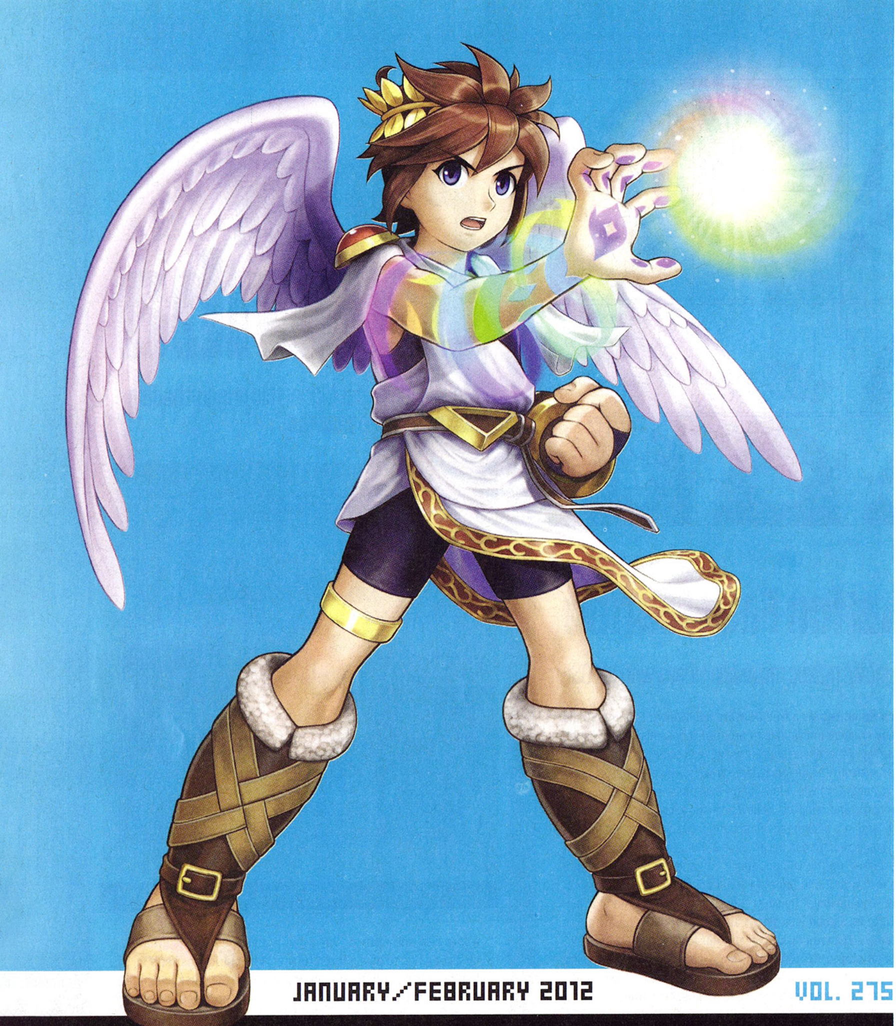


We've seen a lot of origami before, but few are as impressive as this.

FROM THE BEGINNING, Mario games have been full of great ideas begging to be explored further. And Mario fans keep finding new ways to refine their homages to the plucky plumber and his non-plumbing adventures. This one, however, is knee-weakening in its beauty and the patience it took to construct: message-board lurker Helium Kid—who wishes to remain anonymous—proudly broke his (or her?) silence to present to the world this astonishing unit-origami Goomba made from 256 sheets of multicolored paper meticulously folded over the course of two months.

Helium Kid says the idea came to mind after reading Japanese origami writer Tomoko Fuse's *Origami Quilts* and came across a mosaic that connected units to form a collection of squares—or pixels.

"I love Nintendo games and unit origami has been a hobby of mine for many years, so this was my way to combine these two interests," Helium Kid tells us. "Also, I wanted to make something that would be easily recognizable, and Super Mario Bros. is the perfect game for classic video game icons." We definitely agree. **—DAVID W.**



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NEXT MONTH

We now bid a fond farewell to the year 2011, but Nintendo Power looks ever forward. Join us next issue when we take a sneak peek at some of the hottest games that you'll be playing in the upcoming year, including Kid Icarus: Uprising for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

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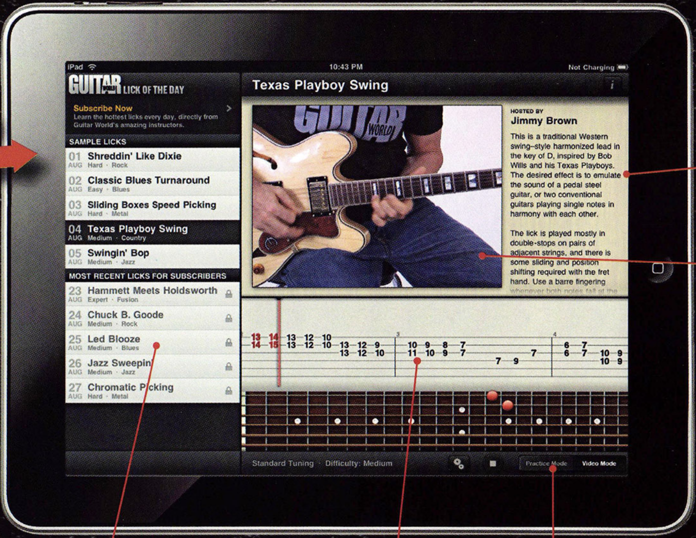
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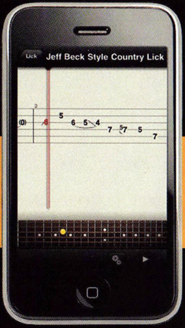
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